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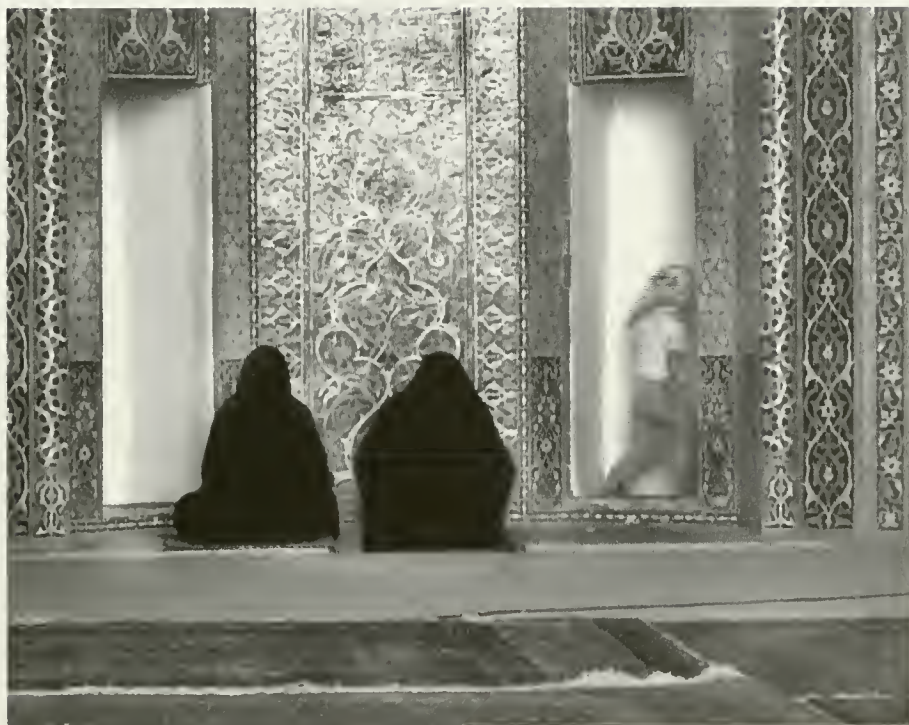
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Cover Image: Map of Europe, depicted in the form of the crowned Virgin by Heinrich Bunting, 1581.

Title Page Image: Still from the video *Between Prayers* by Çağla Hadimioglu, 2002.

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JANNA ISRAEL  
INTRODUCTION



1

What is a Wife & what is a Harlot? What is a Church? & What is a Theatre? are they Two and not One? Can they Exist Separate? Are not Religion & Politics the Same Thing? Brotherhood is Religion. O Demonstrations of Reason Dividing Families in Cruelty & Pride!

—William Blake, *Jerusalem* 57:8-10

The well-editorialized controversy that took place at the end of 1999 over the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition, "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection," centered around Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's attempt to cut funding to the Museum, principally due to the inclusion of the 1996 Chris Ofili painting, *The Holy Virgin Mary*. It depicts a black Virgin covered with glitter, map tacks, collages of bare backsides floating around the figure like *putti*, and the infamous elephant excrement, apparently ubiquitous in Zimbabwe where the artist had once gone for research. While the audiotape accompanying the exhibition cited the artist's experiments with materials to create an "earthy" Virgin, Giuliani referred to the show, and Ofili's piece in particular, as "Catholic-bashing."<sup>1</sup>

The sensationalism of Ofili's painting was the curator's triumph, which escaped Giuliani as he threatened censorship during the senatorial campaign. Contrast the reaction to the "Sensation" exhibition with the isolated instances of "subversion" in the modern religious art collections in the Vatican Museums. Visitors often spend little time in or bypass the Borgia apartments which house the modern religious art collection. Most of the art in the collection con-

sists of familiar religious themes, scenes from the Bible, abstract religious symbolism, and several portraits of popes.

One portrait in particular, Francis Bacon's 1953 *Study for a Pope II* reconsiders Velázquez' 1650 portrait of Pope Innocent X as a shadowy, slouched figure with distorted facial features in front of a dark background. Throughout the 1950s, Bacon frequently reworked the Velázquez portrait and revisited his own interpretations of the seventeenth-century painting. He paired the pope with a chimpanzee in one version; in others, the pope covers his face as though in shame or he screams; he always seems somehow prurient.

Bacon serves as an unlikely beacon of modern religious art at the Vatican; he was openly homosexual, eschewed organized religion and he often subverted motifs of Christianity in his work. However, he explained his frequent return to the portrait as the pursuit of a formal line of inquiry—not as an explicit critique of Catholicism or its figurehead.<sup>2</sup> But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the figure of the pope was related for Bacon to primordial feelings of bestial entrapment and it is hard to look at Bacon's Pope in the Vatican without seeing the painting as a part of the series.



2



3

If Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary* found an audience in the unstable, but profitable ground of hype, Bacon's *Pope* now festers, largely unnoticed, as a legitimate religious art object by the authority of the Church. The divergent lives of the two paintings have been determined, for the most part, by exposure, but the two paintings illustrate the easy use of religious rhetoric for political gain, despite the relatively short span of the shadow cast by religion on contemporary secular life. The Bacon painting was a gift from the powerful Fiat magnate, Gianni Agnelli; its place on the Vatican Museums' walls contains its power of critique. In any event, the pope has not threatened to cut off funding to the Vatican for exhibiting images which could be considered as partaking in "Catholic-bashing."

This issue of *Thresholds* explores the way in which art, architecture, landscapes, and cities, real and imagined, pursue, sustain, and even elude sacred identities. As the Ofili and the Bacon paintings show, a specific religious identity is often imposed onto a work. Many of the articles presented here address not only how religious rhetoric can distort the reception of an object, but how the absence of an initiating presence for faith also distorts its representation.

Visual, metaphorical, allegorical, or spatial manifestations of religion and spirituality rely in some capacity on the distortion of the known and recognizable world through the interpretation of doctrine and sacred texts; the explanation of religious belief generally occurs within the basic contours of what is known, but the distortion lies in the qualification by the imposition of literature and doctrine.

Inherited religious myths are themselves distorted, re-presented anew, as in the image of Adam as a “man with microscopes and telescopes for eyes.” Joanna Picciotto describes the framing of experimentalism on the cusp of the Enlightenment through interpretations of the book of *Genesis*. She argues that scientists and politicians envisioned themselves as inhabiting a state of purgation, physically and intellectually laboring to achieve objectivity and scientific progress, paradoxically, through a return to Adamic innocence. While Scripture provided a framework for the experimental enterprise of the seventeenth-century scientist, the use of early Islamic texts to chart territory rendered space malleable far from contemporary understandings of accuracy. Samer Akkach shows that the pre-modern absence of a scientific grounding for geography often transposed the world into an icon, based on theological and religious texts. The texts and the visual imagination served to mutually reinforce each other as the space between sacred sites collapsed based on religious continuity rather than geographic distance.

The repeated use of religious rhetoric in the political realm also serves to distort. Claims to “promised lands,” sites consigned by “covenant” or “divine ordinance,” and colonial enterprises ideologically founded on conversion have been legitimized by the authority of religious doctrine and scriptural narratives. Daniel Monk discusses the “abstraction” of architecture in the conflict over land in Palestine and Israel to achieve political “immediacy.” The designation of a site as holy turns it into a symbol with a willfully unstable meaning as the drive towards a religiously idealized history splits from the actual version of a site’s history.

Florian Urban examines how the conception of post World War II Berlin brought about similar abstractions in the attempt to regain what was believed to be the city’s aura. He describes plans for the rebuilding of the city to understand the spiritual identification with an idealized past and

the near impossibility of its replication. While it may be difficult for the living city to face its history and find its spiritual center, it is, however, the aspiration of religious building. Nasser Rabbat describes how the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and the Ka’ba in Mecca serve double purposes as holy sites; they represent Koranic interpretations of faith and they give shape to collective memory. His identification of a fusion between universal acts of devotion and evocations of private life begins to dissolve the entrenched demarcations of sacred and profane space in histories of religious sites.

The articles here show that while the strength of religion is historically conditioned, the tenacity of faith in classifying objects and places as sacred, sacrilegious, idolatrous, profane, didactic, etc. continues to be as much a function of politics and the survival mechanisms of belief systems as it is theologically motivated. In the case of the Ofili and Bacon paintings, they have been assigned to their opposing religious posts by the government and the Church respectively. While the religious intent of the Bacon and Ofili paintings is not immediately apparent, Francis Bacon’s ritual return to the pope through his deformations of Velázquez’ *Innocent X* and Ofili’s attempt to create of a more regionally specific Virgin literally distort the familiar representation of the image. By reconfiguring conventional religious motifs, they question the very nature of the iconic figures themselves. Thus, the branded heretic is often more accurately the artistic inquisitor, shirking the mimetic protocols of doctrinal ritual and meaning in favor of a spiritual inspiration from outside the proscribed parameters of religion.

## NOTES

1. *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* (New York, Thames and Hudson, 1998) 133.
2. *Francis Bacon: Important Paintings from the Estate* (New York: Tony Shafrazi Gallery, 1998.), 24

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Chris Ofili, *The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996.

Fig. 2: Francis Bacon, *Study for a Pope II*, Collection of Modern Religious Art, The Vatican Museums.

Fig. 3: Francis Bacon, *Study after Velazquez Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953.



*"What is the meaning of red?" the blind miniaturist who'd drawn the horse from memory asked again.*

*"The meaning of color is that it is there before us and we see it," said the other. "Red cannot be explained to he who cannot see."*

*"To deny God's existence, victims of Satan maintain that God is not visible to us," said the blind miniaturist who'd rendered the horse.*

*"Yet, He appears to those who can see," said the other master. "It is for this reason that the Koran states that the blind and the seeing are not equal."*

*My Name is Red, Orhan Pamuk*

FREDERICK M. ASHER  
SHAPING CONTESTATION:  
THE KATRA MOUND OF MATHURA



INTRODUCTION

Anyone who takes a course in the art of India will encounter a late first-century figure commonly known as the Katra Buddha, found at the Katra Mound in Mathura, about 145 kilometers south of Delhi (Fig. 1). They will not, however, encounter the very long and contentious history of this sculpture's find spot, a history which continues to have intense ramifications for the present.

The Katra Mound is located on the western side of Mathura, adjacent to the Bhuteshar Mound, where extensive Buddhist remains were excavated, and less than a kilometer from the so-called Jain Stupa site, the Kankali Tila.<sup>1</sup> That the Katra Mound was the site of a Buddhist monastery seems likely due to the several images of Buddha found there.<sup>2</sup> But the Buddhist monastery was not the only occupant of the Katra Mound. Objects with Jain and Brahmanical images such as a Kushan-period pedestal inscribed with an image of a seated Tirthankara and a Gupta lintel with an image of the Hindu god Vishnu were also found there.<sup>3</sup> We know that it was the location of the Keshavadeva temple, a Hindu temple, dismantled under Aurangzeb's orders and replaced with a great mosque that still occupies the site (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup>

The replacement of a temple by a mosque was clearly intentional and sequential. But should we assume, as Alexander Cunningham asserts, that the Katra Mound has always been occupied sequentially, that is, first by Buddhists, then Brahmans, and finally Musalmans?<sup>5</sup> This assertion, and others like it, assumes exclusive propriety of the sacred site at any given time, a notion that fits well with the assumptions of certain types of art history, committed to explaining history in sequences. But is that notion largely a construct of



2

a present-day world in which territory is more often contested on religious grounds than simply shared?

We must situate the destruction and transformation of the Keshavadeva temple in its historical context. The temple was built at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Raja Bir Singh Deo of Orchha and was supported by imperial Mughal funds. Thus, it was not a temple of great antiquity and it was specifically associated with the memory of a living person—still alive in 1669, when the temple was destroyed in retaliation for Jat uprisings in the area around Mathura. Mughal losses were massive and included the Mughal commandant of Mathura.<sup>6</sup> The destruction was thus politically, not religiously, motivated.

Today, the site has been imbued with a new meaning. It has been identified as the locus of Krishna's birthplace, and a large temple complex has been constructed immediately

abutting the mosque. The space is not just contested, it is highly charged. A temple marks what is now known as Krishna Janmabhumi, the site claimed as the exact location of his birth (Fig. 4). Another temple, still newer and even larger, celebrates the site of Krishna's birth, if not its precise location. Thousands descend everyday upon the temple compound. By contrast, however, few visitors go to the old mosque even though its entrance is only several hundred meters away from the entrance to the temple compound. Even though the mosque remains standing at the moment, Viva Hindu Parishad is intent on its demolition.

#### RELIGIOUS INTERACTION AND IDENTITY IN PRE-MODERN INDIA

The current tension between Hindus and Muslims in India is largely a result of a colonial insistence on defining individual identity based on religion rather than on any pre-colonial social phenomenon (Fig. 3). Even in recent history, the

notion of distinct religious and ceremonial spaces was not entirely pertinent. For example, a report in the nineteenth-century edition of the *Gwalior District Gazetteer* states:

There has been a custom, since the days of the Maratha rule, for the people of different religions to join in the festival celebrations of other religions. For instance, the Maharaja Sindhia and his Sardars used to participate in the Tazia processions during Moharram, and the Muslims took part in Dussehra celebrations.<sup>7</sup>

"...At one of most sacred sites of Islam in all South Asia, the Dargah of Muin-ud-Din Chishti," an older edition of the *Ajmer District Gazetteer* notes, "the shrine of Khwaja Sahib is venerated and visited by Hindus as well as Muhammadans and other Indians irrespective of their religion."<sup>8</sup> This underscores the need to consider with care the

meaning of religious identity in South Asia. To what extent does the current makeup of religious identities devoid of communitarian dimensions overlap with the legacy of colonial reforms? Perhaps the making of this pigeonholed religious strata can be most closely associated with the first all-India census in 1871, which mandated counting individuals by religious categories conceived by the British.<sup>9</sup> There are even cases in which communities identify as *both* Hindus and Muslims, for example, the Patuas of Bengal or the Meherata Rajputs of the Udaipur and Amjer Districts.<sup>10</sup> In cases such as these, members of the communities do not imagine a dual identity but rather, they simply identify with the larger community and its culturally instilled practices.<sup>11</sup>

There are many other examples of shared religious spaces in India. For example, there are temples that are possibly Hindu at the site of Buddhist monasteries such as those from the monasteries of Sanchi and Nalanda. Their shared forms make them essentially indistinguishable, suggesting a common Indian visual vocabulary that extends beyond these two religions. For example, at Khajuraho, the Jain temples of Parshvanatha and Adinatha form part of the so-called Eastern Group. During the fifth-century Gupta dynasty, followers of the Hindu god Vishnu patronized a Buddhist monastery, Nalanda, and the Mughal emperor, Akbar, built a Hindu temple at Brindavan through his agent, Raja Man Singh. In turn, Raja Man Singh built an enormous mosque at Rajmahal in Bengal. Even Aurangzeb, who destroyed Bir Singh Deo's temple on the Katra Mound and replaced it with a mosque, granted extensive land to support the operation of Hindu temples.<sup>12</sup>

### THE KATRA MOUND

All pertinent pre-modern texts on the subject agree that Krishna was born in Mathura. Yet they do not specify the precise location of the birth in the city.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, all Mathura and its environs were considered sacred, as indicated by the impressively large circuit of pilgrimage sites associated with Krishna in the region. The present siting of the god's birthplace at the Katra Mound, therefore, does not seem to have any real foundation in antiquity.

We have relatively little information about the temple built by Bir Singh Deo, which was demolished and replaced by Aurangzeb's mosque. There are no surviving inscriptions commemorating its foundation. In addition, no other references of such an association are found in the European and local scholarship on the subject. For example, F.S. Growse, the district officer of the region, recognized the importance







of Krishna to Mathura in his 1883 book, *Mathura: A District Memoir*.<sup>14</sup> But when he discusses the Katra Mound and Bir Singh's temple that once stood there, he never identifies it as the site of Krishna's birth. This is not simply a sign of neglected or undiscovered evidence. Growe's report pays considerable attention to local traditions and reflects the absence of a reference to any such association in them

The French jeweler, Tavernier, does not refer to Krishna's birth in his detailed description of the site, two centuries before Growse.<sup>15</sup> Tavernier saw the temple around 1650 and describes it as the third most important temple in all India and one of the most sumptuous in the realm, even though, he reports, not many Hindus worship there. Tavernier notes his encounter with the priests and even describes viewing the temple's main image, but nowhere does he suggest its association with the birth of the god Krishna.<sup>16</sup>

Many historians have argued that Bir Singh's temple was not the first at the site. Some six hundred years later, Badauni, now well-known for his anti-Hindu stance, argued

that there had been a temple on the Katra site which Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni destroyed when he raided Mathura in 1017.<sup>17</sup> We also have Mahmud's own claim that the numerous idols he destroyed in a temple at Mathura yielded immense amounts of gold and jewels.<sup>18</sup>

The damage wrought by Mahmud did not last long. An inscription found at the Katra Mound dated 1150, that is, 133 years after the time of Mahmud of Ghazni, mentions the construction of a temple of Vishnu at the site, so brilliantly white and large that it was said to be "touching the clouds."<sup>19</sup> The inscription makes no mention of the claim that this temple replaced an earlier building or that its location marks the birthplace of Krishna. Given the complete absence of such references in the various historical documents relating to the site, it is hard to believe that this site was seen in 1150 as Krishna's *Janmabhūm*, or birthplace. What happened to this temple that necessitated its replacement by Bir Singh Deo is also quite uncertain. It is generally stated with considerable confidence that Sikander Lodi (r.1489-1517) destroyed the temple.<sup>20</sup> There is, however, no historical evidence of such a claim. We only know that

Lodi constructed a mosque at Mathura and persecuted several Hindus. We learn from the account of a Jesuit, Father Monserrate, present from 1580-1582 at the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, that many temples were found in the area and that huge crowds of pilgrims came from all over India to one temple in particular—one that must have escaped Sikander Lodi's desecration, if indeed, he did desecrate temples.

#### KRISHNA JANMABHUMI

To what extent is a historical document of consequence to religious belief? The present temples comprising the site known as Krishna Janmabhumi at the Katra Mound shape belief; they do not simply mark or commemorate it (Fig. 4). Historically, the site has carried considerable importance. Various versions of the *Mathura Mahatmya*, especially relatively late versions of this text on Mathura's sanctity, conceptualize the Katra Mound as the center of a lotus which is used to map Mathura, perhaps because it is Mathura's highest point.<sup>21</sup> But no version of this text associates the Mound with Krishna's birthplace. This claim seems to have evolved, at least in part, to strengthen legal claims to the site. Muslims who argued that the Mound belonged to the mosque constructed there brought the first claim to court in 1878. Although we know little about the background of this claim, we can surmise that it was entered because the Muslim community began to feel that the lineage of their mosque was seriously contested. The verdict concluded, to the detriment of the Muslim community, that the Katra Mound had not been owned but that King Patnimal of Banaras had purchased it from the East India Company in 1815. At least three subsequent court cases were filed, but they assigned ownership of the mosque to descendants of the Hindu King Patnimal. In 1944, J. K. Birla purchased the land from the descendants of King Patnimal with the express intention of building a temple, apparently to commemorate the birthplace of Krishna.<sup>22</sup> Almost immediately after the settlement of this case in 1946, a Krishna Janmasthan Trust was established and Birla sold the land to it. Work on a temple commenced in 1953, but was concluded only recently. The temple includes an underground chamber immediately abutting the *qibla* wall of the mosque, believed to be the spot of Krishna's birth. The still larger temple at the site was completed even more recently. Its construction could not have commenced until the decision of the last court case in 1960, which stated that the Krishna Janmasthan Trust legally owned the property and that Muslims were protected for use of the mosque only on the occasion of Eid. Thus, a legal battle among parties who

identified themselves in religious terms managed to transform the space of a temple into the space of a *specific sacred locus*, namely, Krishna's birthplace.

The history of the Katra Mound as a contested space is only part of the issue. The parallel issue begs the question: why can't this space be shared by the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, as one hopes Jerusalem can be shared—at least its religious monuments if not its political status—by Jews, Christians, and Muslims? The answer is, at least in part, dependent on differing conceptions of religious space. For those religions formed on West Asian soil, religious space is generally conceived as a place where adherents might gather. Most sites do not have an inherent sanctity that goes beyond their function.

The West Asian conception of a religious structure is, however, quite different from the Hindu conception of a sacred space. A temple is believed to be god's space, not that of mortals. It is thus charged in ways entirely different from space intended to accommodate mortals. This notion can explain why religious tensions in Belfast, for example, might be effectively fought in the streets or pubs, and those in Jerusalem in the marketplace or on crowded buses, whereas in India, the temple and the mosque have become the objects of contestation.

In the case of Belfast and Jerusalem, the dominance of a nation-state, or at least a specifically designated part of such a modern state, appears to be the desired goal. The protests are public and intended to intimidate the opposition, a battle that is most effectively waged in public space. But in India, where the temple marks god's space, not that of his worshipers, competing shrines are imagined to diminish the unique power of the deity and his ability to manifest himself. Thus in India, the lines are drawn not just on the basis of the religious identity, that is, along social lines, but on the basis of structures, believed to be necessary for god's presence.

Of course, the structure stands for more than god's presence; it is imagined as the very locus of his birth. Birth, of course, irretrievably alters a shared space due to the evocations of the womb, and is, therefore, an event invariably fraught with contestation. This notion cannot be underestimated in seeking to grasp the charged nature of birth sites such as Ayodhya and the Katra Mound.<sup>23</sup>

## SHARED SPACE

Are Hindus and Muslims invariably opposed? Not necessarily; their opposition depends on the currency of their identity. There is at least one place where I have observed a very different interaction between Hindus and Muslims. In Singapore, there is a large Indian community—some 6.4% of the population. These Indians are mostly from South India or Bengal, and are both Hindu and Muslim. Indeed, their religious monuments are often situated side by side, mostly in the area called Little India, but also in other parts of the island nation. This proximity is not based on contested land. Rather, when the currency of identity is national origin—is one Chinese, Malay, or Indian?—members of the minority group, Indian in this case, bond on the basis of their Indian heritage rather than on the basis of their religious identity. By fragmenting themselves further—after religious allegiance—their voices would become even more restricted. Perhaps, this can serve as a lesson for small nations that fracture along religious lines.

## NOTES

- 1 See Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Reports* vol. I, reprinted (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972), plate XXXIX, for a map of Mathura that shows the site, there called Katara.
- 2 Joanna Williams, "A Mathura Gupta Buddha Reconsidered," *Lalit Kal* vol. 17 (1974): 28-32. The well-known standing Buddha dated to 280 AD was found beside a seated Bodhisattva of the Kushana period at the Katra Mound. Joanna Williams has effectively shown this to be a work of the Early Gupta period.
- 3 V.S. Agrawala, "Catalogue of the Mathura Museum; III. Jaina Tirthankaras and Other Miscellaneous Figures," *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society* Vol. XXIII (1950): 46. V.S. Agrawala, "Catalogue of the Mathura Museum; II. A Catalogue of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in Mathura Art," *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society* Vol. XXII (1949): 109-110.
- 4 For a vitriolic diatribe against those who, like me, see the likelihood that the Vaishnava temples were constructed on the remains of older Buddhist and Jain structures, see Sita Ram Goel, *Hindu Temples; What Happened to Them* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1993), chapter 5. This should set to rest any doubt about the political nature of arguments over this space.
- 5 Cunningham, 235.
- 6 Much of this history is summarized in Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 162-164.
- 7 *Madhya Pradesh District Gazetteers, Gwalior* (Bhopal: Government Central Press, 1965), 56. The passage quotes a previous edition of the *Gazetteer*.
- 8 *Rajasthan District Gazetteers, Ajmer* (Jaipur: Government Central Press, 1966), 715. The passage quotes a previous edition of the *Gazetteer*.
- 9 Kenneth W. Jones, "Religious Identity and the Indian Census," in *The Census*

in *British India*, edited by N. Gerald Barrier (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), 73-101.

10 Binoy Bhattacharjee, *Cultural Oscillation: A Study on Patua Culture* (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1980); Harjot Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10-12.

11 Oberoi, 8-9. Oberoi makes the case that in the nineteenth century, a classificatory model for religious identity that did not necessarily reflect indigenous reality was imposed.

12 *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* Vol. 5/4 (1957): 247-254

13 A.W. Entwistle, *Brar: Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1987).

14 F.S. Growse, *Mathura. A District Memoir* (Allahabad: Northwestern Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1883).

15 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, edited by V. Ball and William Crooke (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1976), 187.

16 Tavernier, 187.

17 George S.A. Ranking, ed. and trans., *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1898), 24-25. See also Entwistle, 125. He asserts that Mahmud destroyed the temple, yet he offers no historical evidence for his claim.

18 For a translation of Mahmud's reference to the conquest of Mathura, see Abu al-Nasr Abd al-Jabbar, *The Kitab-i-Yamini: Historical Memoirs of the Amir Sabaktagin, and the Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* (London: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1858), 454-456. This suggests that Mahmud and other Muslim invaders after him sought valuable commodities much more than the satisfaction of engaging in iconoclastic despoilment. In pre-modern warfare, one way of encouraging and paying an army was the promise of plunder. In Islam—as in the other Western Asian religions, namely Christianity and Judaism—religious structures are gathering places; they are congregational, quite unlike a Hindu temple. It is likely that conquerors such as Mahmud of Ghazni imagined that by destroying temples they were eradicating gathering places for people, an institution fundamental to a social network and thus, to the potential resistance.

19 Georg Buhler, "The Mathura Prasasti of the Reign of Vijayapala, Dated Samvat 1207," *Epigraphia Indica* Vol. I (1892): 287-293.

20 Entwistle, 134-136.

21 *Ibid.*, 320.

22 *Ibid.*, 216-217.

23 I am indebted to my colleague, Jane Blocker, for this insight. I need to pursue this point further in order to understand better the charged nature of these birth sites.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Buddha from the Katra Mound, Mathura.

Fig. 2: Idgah Mosque adjacent to Krishna Janmabhumi.

Fig. 3: Map showing Mathura and related sites.

Fig. 4: Krishna Janmabhumi, overall view.

JOANNA PICCIOTTO

## PROGRESS AND THE SPACE OF PREHISTORY

In early modern England, experimental philosophers and the writers they influenced were entranced by the research question put forward by Francis Bacon: whether “that same commerce of the mind and of things...might by any means be entirely restored” to its perfect and original condition.”<sup>1</sup> The mortification of Copernicanism, the epiphany of a microworld beneath the threshold of visibility, and the resurrection of the ancient atomists’ distinction between primary and secondary qualities all provided reasons for experimentalists to believe that the first man had been immune to perceptual limitation and rational error; in his created state, at least, man must have been equal to his status as the sovereign and designated witness of creation. Innocence was thus to be identified not with ignorance, but with insight. Understood as the subject of extreme epistemological privilege, Adam was not a nostalgia-inspiring figure, his experience of the world being utterly alien by definition. The early modern laboratory was consecrated to the task of reversing the moment of transformation from the alien to the familiar; here, experimentalists attempted to break down the phenomenological boundary that separated corrupted humanity from created humanity.

Experimentalists glimpsed their idealized self-image in the Adam who named the creatures (*Genesis* 2:19). Taking the opportunity in his *History of the Royal Society* to muse on “the first service, that *Adam* perform’d to his *Creator*, when he obey’d him in mustering, and naming, and looking into the *Nature* of all the *Creatures*,” Bishop Thomas Sprat grew wistful: “this had bin the only *Religion*, if men had continued innocent in *Paradise*.”<sup>2</sup> Sprat’s redescription of the scene of naming as the first act of obedience fuses worship of God with the gratification of curiosity, the cognitive appetite once held responsible for the fall. It also dilates the

scene of naming to encompass experimental methods: Adam did not just name the creatures after surveying them, he mustered and looked into them; through techniques like dissection and the use of optical instruments, the experimentalist did the same. Revealing to readers of his *Micrographia* the “stupendious Mechanisms and contrivances” that characterize “the smallest and most despicable Fly” when viewed under a microscope, Robert Hooke wondered, “Who knows but Adam might from some such contemplation, give names to all creatures?” Hooke went on to suggest that God has given us “a capacity, which, assisted with diligence and industry,” might enable us to see what Adam saw, and to assign the same names to nature.<sup>3</sup> To claim, as Joseph Glanvill, that Adam had not originally needed “*Galileo’s* tube” in order to contemplate distant planets, and that “he had as clear a perception of the earths motion, as we think we have of its quiescence” was clearly to celebrate *contemporary* discoveries.<sup>4</sup> Just as the image of Adam as a man with microscopes and telescopes for eyes lifts technology out of history, the transformation of Eden into a specifically epistemological paradise cleanses originary desire of any attachment to a privileged time or place.

The doctrine of original sin made identification with Adam compulsory at the moment of the first disobedience; experimentalists grasped this compulsory identification, using the innocent Adam to designate the expression of human intellectual potential under ideal conditions—conditions that they worked to recreate. If no single individual had a claim on the privileged perspective of humanity’s first representative, the collective subject of the new science did. As experimentalists worked to transform their identification with Adam into a relationship of identity, the metaphorical



link between the laboratory and paradise became mutually conditioning. The project of paradisaal recovery was enmeshed in the cognitive and physical struggles that characterize efforts to construct an objective perspective on the world: the impossibility of the goal guaranteed its permanence. The means and the end of paradisaal recovery collapsed, and Eden came to assume the features of a working laboratory.

While the godly cognitive appetite was an incentive to industry in Adam, Eve's association with carnal appetite sanctioned a new etiology of the first sin as the perversion of the first virtue: "idle curiosity." Eve fell because she "neglected her daily Work" and "was at leisure," not because she exhibited an investigative interest in God's work, which would have been laudable. The fall was the result of an *insufficiently rigorous* curiosity, which tempted her to put her trust in "thin Appearance" and "subtle Fallacies." The sin represented by the forbidden fruit was not the desire for knowledge but the desire, in the words of John Milton's Eve, to "feed at once both Bodie and Mind," rather than working to subject the body to the demands of the mind. The experimentalist etiology of sin reveals innocence to be a *method*. The regenerate intellectual laborer who displayed intellectual chastity or a "virgin Mind"—the willed innocence or objectivity of the modern scientist—along with a commitment to continuous labor was the product of this method.<sup>5</sup> The intellectual hunger and restlessness once associated with the internalized serpent of original sin thus motivated a divinely sanctioned disciplinary regimen of perpetual self-exertion, a complex and torturous process whose aim was to recover paradise by the very means it was once thought to have been lost.

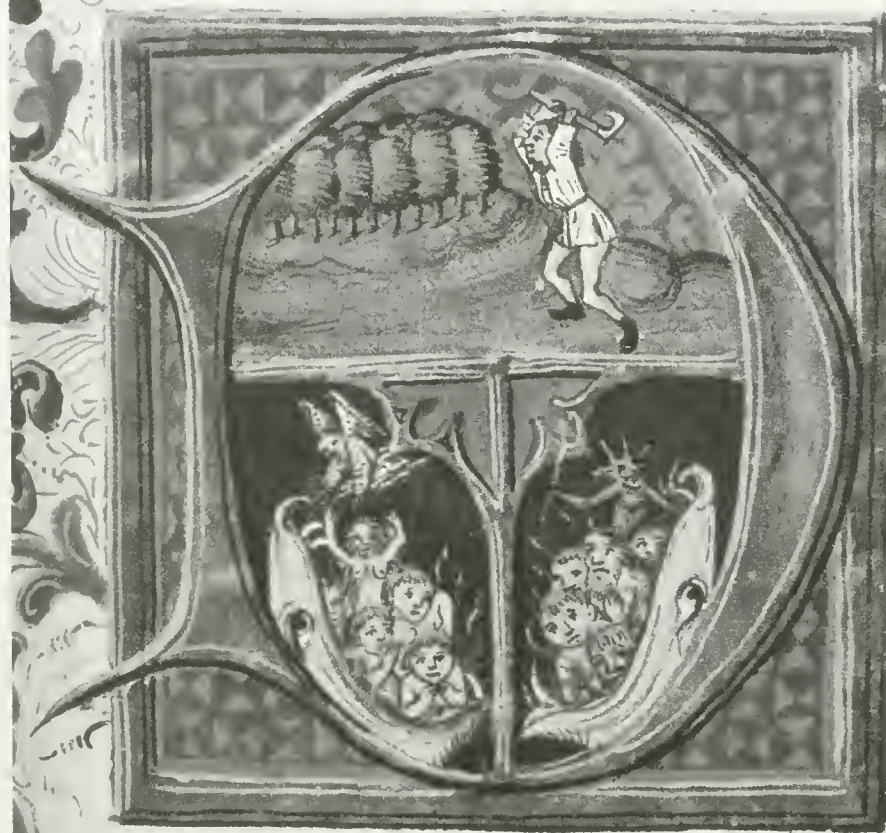
The identification of the innocent Adam as a physical and intellectual laborer promoted the notion that regenerate intellectual pursuits, far from being the fruits of idleness, were in fact work. In his treatise on paradise, which he dedicated to Bacon, John Salkeld insists that innocent man would not have been happy living an idle life; hence "Man therefore is no sooner made, then he is set to work...that hee working might keepe paradise, and paradise by the same worke might keep him from idleness, from sinne." It follows that if "cheerefully we go about our business, so much nearer we come to our Paradise." This laborious program of *imitatio Adami* renders work "a recreation, and rejoicing of the will and minde," and a means to make and keep the self holy.<sup>6</sup> Since "Wearisome toiles, and labours" turn out to be the very stuff of paradise, Milton's Adam is

actually *relieved* by the curse, which reassures him that he won't be, as he puts it, "unemployed" after his expulsion from the garden. When the young Robert Boyle built his first laboratory—literally a "workroom"—on his estate, he felt like he had escaped into "Elysium." Describing the bitter-sweet pleasures of investigation he pursued there, Boyle observed that the success of his "best toils" only engaged him in new ones. The work involved not only to regain but simply to inhabit paradise was perpetual.

This georgic ideal of paradise seems a far cry from medieval depictions of Eden as a *hortus conclusus*, but it extends medieval treatments of the postlapsarian Adam as the first laborer. Medieval representations of the garden control the conceptual fertility of Eden as a symbolic site of human achievement and self-sufficiency, identifying the enclosed fertility of Eden with the Mother of Christ, the second Adam. In medieval representations of the fall and the curse, however, we see Adam and Eve unobscured by Marian camouflage. Compared to the decorous and static imagery of the enclosed garden, such representations seem positively boisterous since they show Adam and Eve at work. A thirteenth-century English Book of Hours depicts an angel giving a spade and distaff to Adam and Eve; the rose window in the north transept of the Lincoln Cathedral features "the angel instructing Adam and Eve in the arts of digging and spinning."<sup>7</sup> These angelic overseers encourage us to regard the scenes they grace as independently celebratory images of the laborers from whom all human beings descended and in whom they were all represented. If these images look forward to Christ at all, it is by suggesting not a need for Christ, but a continuity with him in his kenosis as a *homo pauperrimus*.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the motif of Adam at work evoked the equality of humanity's original state. The proverb "When Adam delf and Eve span, / Where was than the pride of man?" blended the ontological prestige of the original order of creation with work, the most prominent feature of the fallen world. It suspends the first laborer between his fallen and unfallen state; the image of the first laborer in his humility and lack of pride merges with Adam in the state of blameless innocence. John Ball, one of the leaders of the Peasants Revolt of 1381, devoted his celebrated Blackheath sermon to expounding a variant of the proverb: "Whanne Adam dalfe and Eve span, / Who was thanne a gentil man?" arguing that "all were created to be equal by nature [*a natural*] from the beginning [*a principio*]." Fusing "by nature" and "from the beginning," this originary

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mode of thought performs revolutionary work, identifying the absolutely novel with the originary and the "real."<sup>8</sup>

Ball's sermon was revived in the activities of the Diggers, who assumed control of St. George's Hill in Surrey in 1649, claiming collective ownership of this land on the basis of the labor they had invested in it. This project of "acting with Plow and Spade"—creating revolution through the work of "delving"—depended on a collective identification with Adam. As their leader Gerrard Winstanley put it, "The Earth in the first Creation of it, was freely given to whole mankind, without respect of Persons;" the word of command was imparted "to whole mankinde (not to one or a few single branches of mankinde) to take possession." The "naked Spademen" who were causing such commotion, he explained, *are* Adam, who is now "risen to great strength, and the whole Earth is now filled with him." As Eden was restored on St. George's Hill, the "Lord of the Earth" was revealed to be all people willing to imitate the first working sovereign. The freedom to labor, to enjoy "the free content of the fruits and crops of this outward Earth, upon which their bodies stand: this was called The mans innocency, or pleasure in the Garden before the fall." Work is not the result of the curse but a recovery of innocence and delight. In digging and delving, the Diggers asked only to "quietly improve the...Common Land...thereby our own Land will be increased with all sorts of Commodities." The restoration of paradisaical communism would generate commodities for the comfort of human life; as Bacon's research framework posited, the project of Edenic restoration coincided with a process of continual improvement.<sup>9</sup>

Both the scientific and political revolutions of seventeenth-century England thus depended on a collective identification with the first intellectual and physical laborer. The Diggers' recovery of the original state of nature, like the experimentalists' recovery of Adam's understanding of and control over the natural world, demanded the investment of human energy in a necessarily imperfect and accretional activity whose ultimate goal no individual participant would survive to reach. Addressing a reader who is experiencing "confusions that are in the world, or in your owne heart, concerning the first *Adam*," the prophet Henry Pinnell declared,

These may goe to the plow-man for their answer and satisfaction: He will tell them that by the continuall motion of his Cart and Plow wheeles, he hath his business done, whereas if they stood still, he could have no seed sowne, no crop

reaped, nor any profit at all made of his land; yet in the revolution of the wheel, no spoke therein is alwayes fixed either upward or downward...the spirit of life within keeps this wheel in motion: God will have his people make a progresse; He will carry them from dispensation to dispensation; from strength to strength, and never let them stand still (in any forme) till they appeare in the perfection and beauty of the Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

In this tendentially workmanlike image, the plowman getting "his business done" does the work of paradise and stands as an exemplum for a whole nation. The "spirit of life" is captured in the movement of his cart and plow; by perpetually returning to their starting point the wheels move the vehicle, and his labor, forward. Revolution originally meant a turning back to the first point. The term first used to articulate fidelity to origins had become the vocabulary of progress.<sup>11</sup>

A fifteenth-century manuscript illumination examined by Stephen Greenblatt in *Hamlet in Purgatory* suggests a wider context for understanding the identification of Adam's labor power with the force of progress.<sup>12</sup> It depicts a lone peasant raising a hoe above his head; he is either working the field or digging a grave. In either case, he is an Adamic "delver." Although the ground he is tilling seems solid to him, our cross-section view reveals it to be paper-thin. Just beneath the earth's surface is a cavern containing two chambers, hell and purgatory, into which the unsuspecting delver is clearly digging his way. An unsentimental sense of the trajectory of fallen life is here contracted into an efficient little emblem: a life of incessant work abruptly concluding in either damnation or redemption. Hell and Purgatory appear to be almost identical; both are filled with naked people undergoing torments in flames, but the purgatorial flames are graced by the presence of an angel while the torments of hell are presided over by a demon. When we look more closely, we find that the angel's gesture recapitulates the upwards slant of Adam's hoe; both contrast with the devil's downward gesture. The link is so unmistakable that it seems like a riff on the motif of the angel handing Adam his working tools. A visual link is thus established between purgation and labor, between the trial by fire and the trial of work.

How did this link survive the dissolution of purgatory? An early seventeenth-century book of spiritual exercises provides a clue: it is called *Adam's Garden: A Meditation of*



*Thankfulnesse and Praises Unto the Lord, for the Returne and Restore of Adam and his Posteritie: Planted as Flowers in a Garden, and published by a Gentle-man, long exercised, and happilie trained in the schoole of God's afflictions.* Presenting spiritual meditation and exercise as a method of replanting Adam's garden, it elaborates the themes of return and restoration in floral code. "This exercise I call *Adams Garden*," the writer explains; he asks God to "helpe mee, to plant, to square, and frame everie quarter...to undergoe my calling, to digge and delve still, by penaltie from the first *Adam*."<sup>13</sup> This figurative delving is not just a penalty for sin but a way to purge oneself of it; yet the action of purgation is undertaken in a space very like the one that this action is supposed to restore. The means and end of return have again become blended together. Shot through with the purgatorial language of trial, the treatise weaves into its horticultural frame the conventional motifs of purgatory as both a fiery chamber and a school to prepare for heaven. This Adamic delver thanks God for "instructing and nurturing mee in thy owne most holy schoole of discipline" where he is "shaken with the rods of thy schoole and academy;" he is grateful to be made "sweete and acceptable, by the often scowring and purging of that inherent corruption."<sup>14</sup> It is not merely that labor and purgation are associated: labor *is* purgation, and, more strangely, it is somehow also paradisaal. Purgatorial burning was also woven into Winstanley's paradisaal labors: members of the Digger collective had to cleanse themselves of the "corrupt bloud" which was responsible for vainglorious institutions like monarchy, a corruption "that runs in every man, and womans vaines, more or lesse, till reason the spirit of burning cast him out;" the burning and casting out of pride, the root of all sin, was accomplished through the exercise of reason and through the exertion of labor, the innocent tilling of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

The disappearance of purgatory made it essential to experience purgatory while still on earth: William Gibson's *Election and Reprobation Scripturally and Experimentally Witnessed unto London* warns the reader against those who "preach up IMPERFECTION and SIN for Term of Life," stressing that justification through faith does not mean that those who receive grace can't lose it; through "Sloth, Negligence, and Unwatchfulness," people can and do so all the time. It is by undertaking a life-long labor that we can become—and keep becoming—"new creatures." "We will have no other opportunity to do so: neither is there any

Purgatory (as some do falsly preach) to purge people from their sins after they are dead and put in their Graves;" the time to enter "the Heavenly Spiritual School" is now.<sup>16</sup> The dissolution of purgatory deprived sacred geography of a sense of progress. As Jacques le Goff and Greenblatt argue, heaven and hell resist the rule of narrative, but purgatory is a space of and for narrative. Fermenting, incomplete, processual, it existed to enable the story of the soul's progress.<sup>17</sup> Eden took on the newly evacuated functions of this space: having once simply marked a site of origin, Eden now began to mark a moveable terminus of human potential. Extravagantly dilated descriptions of life in Eden attempted an imaginative recovery of innocent life, filling this once brief and thin existence with an ontological fullness and a degree of dynamic activity it had never had before. It was through such descriptions that the concept of innocence itself came to accommodate process: came to demand, in fact, the ongoing efforts of the fallen. The unleashing of purgatorial process from its postmortem chamber resulted in the creation of a purgatorial world, from which the regenerate could work to extract the materials for a paradise of their own making.

The banishment of purgatory was thus paradoxically an expansion of its functions. Greenblatt notes that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton does not feel compelled to go out of his way to refute the doctrine of purgatory: in Milton's epic, and the culture it reflects, there is "no purgatorial space at all;" perhaps another way to put this idea is that, in this culture, there is no escaping purgatory. One searches vainly in Milton's cosmos for a static place of rest resembling Dante's Heaven; even Milton's angels engage in continuous labor to converge more closely towards God. Salkeld made paradise itself into a sort of purgatory when he suggested that it was "not likely that man should have beene confined there onely, until the time of his translation into a more happy estate, which should have bin after his sufficient triall in the terrene of Paradise."<sup>18</sup> Redescribing Eden as a place of trial to prepare Adam and Eve for heaven identified the state of innocence with the dynamic state of regenerate life in general. In the Edenic laboratory, the purgatorial nature of the trials conducted there, and in the newly dignified labors of the mind and body on the fallen world, the means and ends of paradisaal return became entangled, and the very project of recovering Eden, or becoming Adam, became itself "paradisaal"—and purgatorial. Paradise had begun its journey into future time.



## NOTES

- 1 Francis Bacon, *Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning, or the Partitions of Sciences*, interpreted by Gilbert Watts (Oxford, 1640), 1.
- 2 Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London, 1667), 349-50.
- 3 Robert Hooke, *Micrographia, or some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses* (London, 1667), 154
- 4 Joseph Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing, or Confidence in Opinions, Manifested in a Discourse of the Shortness and Uncertainty of our Knowledge, and its Causes, with some Reflexions on Peripateticism and an Apology for Philosophy* (London, 1661), 5.
- 5 *An Essay upon Idleness, or, Chusing to Live without Business* (London, 1707), 3; Walter Charleton, *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana: Or a Fabrick of Science Natural Upon the Hypothesis of Atoms* (London, 1654), 6, 2; John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, second edition, edited by Alastair Fowler (New York: Longman, 1998), IX.779.
- 6 John Salkeld, *A Treatise of Paradise and the Principall Contents thereof* (London, 1617), 143-6.
- 7 Diane McColley, *A Gust for Paradise: Milton's Eden and the Visual Arts* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1992), 28, 156; Jean Delumeau, *A History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, translated by Matthew O'Connell (New York: Continuum, 1995), chapter 6.
- 8 Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California), 108-11; Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (New York, 1973), 211.
- 9 *A Declaration to all the Powers of England, and to all the Powers of the World, shewing the cause why the common people of England have begun, and gives*

*consent to digge up, manure, and sowe corn upon George-Hill in Surry; by those that have subscribed, and thousands more that gives consent in The True Leveller's Standard Advanced.*(1649); Gerrard Winstanley, *A New Yeers Gift for the Parliament and Armie* (London, 1650), 3, 5, 26, 28.

10 Henry Pinnell, *A Word of Prophecy, concerning the Parliament, generall, and the Army* (Cornhill 1648), A6v, A6.

11 Christopher Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution Revisited* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 286; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 430.

12 Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 51.

13 Parhaps by Thomas Saville, (London, 1611), A3v, 1.

14 *Ibid.*, 14, 21-3.

15 *England's Spint Unfolded* (London, 1650), reprinted in *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Charles Webster (London: Routledge, 1974), 121.

16 William Gibson, *Election and Reprobation Scripturally and Experimentally Witnessed unto London* (London, 1678), 107-109.

17 Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1984).

18 Salkeld, 33.

## ILLUSTRATION

Fig. 1: Initial *D*. Peasant (Adam) digging above scenes of Purgatory and Hell. Hugo Ripelin von Straßburg, *Compendium Theologicae Veritatis*, Book 3, Fol. 64va. Würzburg Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. M. ch. F. 690.

# AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL BERTRAND MONK CONDUCTED BY MICHAEL OSMAN, ZEYNEP ÇELİK, AND LUCIA ALLAIS

*In his recent book, *An Aesthetic Occupation: The Immediacy of Architecture and the Palestine Conflict* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), Daniel Monk analyzes the history of the use of architecture as a rhetorical device by the “political actors” of the Palestine/Israel conflict to construct political “immediacy.” In other words, Monk explores how monuments have been used as pivots in a narrative to form an understandable, yet invisible, line of cause and effect. Monk is the first historian to break the conflict into the constituent parts which have come to represent it. He shows that as the participants and observers of the conflict make use of these seemingly concrete objects for justification or make use of them for clarification, the conflict becomes—paradoxically—more abstract. The very nature of a conflict over territory, political autonomy, and national borders in what is called the “Holy Land” lends itself to the denial of liability and to the perpetuation of the conflict itself. As such, this book is the narrative of a prehistory taken for granted in most other histories of contested sites. In this interview with Daniel Monk on November 17, 2002, he discussed how, throughout the history of the conflict, religion has, under various pretexts, helped to render claims for territory and monuments irrefutable.*

**Could you set your book in a critical, personal, and historiographical context for us?**

It would be fair to say that *An Aesthetic Occupation* is really a repudiation of my own earlier efforts to explain the relation between monuments and mass violence in the context of the Middle East conflict. In the first instance, this book is a history of the normative understanding of the relation between architecture and politics, and as such, of my own prior beliefs. This normative explanation is one of immediacy, of a presumption that it is possible to point to architecture and to see a political reality at work in it...directly and without mediation. More specifically, throughout the modern history of this conflict, political actors and interpreters of this struggle have pointed to architecture each time they felt compelled to explain the cause of a mass violence they

privilege as historically transformative. Here, architecture confirms two reciprocal theories of historical change, two seemingly opposed accounts that are, in reality, only one: shrines and holy sites either confirm an *incited* violence, or conversely, they ratify an organic, *spontaneous*, violence—i.e., a violence triggered by the disruption of a transitive relation between people and shrines.

What I have tried to do, then, is to write a history of these reciprocal positions with the purpose of estranging them and, more importantly, with the hope of showing how the unitary vision of history that gives rise to them is untenable. Which is not to suggest that I think that monuments have no relation to politics; rather, I am concerned with the politics disclosed by a struggle’s repeated efforts to assert a relation of immediacy between architecture and history, since *there* what one stumbles over is this conflict’s normalized incapacity to account for itself. To take matters even further: if I suggest that this normalized incapacity of a conflict to account for itself could be described as a “collusive communicative framework”—that is, a tacit consensus at the heart of a struggle—it is in order to ask what might be disclosed about history itself in a context where the dramaturgical organization of political experience introduces itself as an absolute, as a structural abstraction.

**Would it be possible for us, then, to define architectural modernism in general as a belief in immediacy?**

Maybe. In the sense that after Hegel unpacks the Pandora’s box—that is, advances methodically through the universality of mediation—a huge effort to re-identify the concrete with the immediate would be expended in subsequent philosophies and architectural theories. I am talking about the demand for a return to quasi-“phenological” thinking,

but in ways that are cognizant of the fact that this demand has itself been subjected to philosophical reflection on its historical status, that is, to critique. This is why I believe there is a significant quotient of voodoo in modernist architecture and architectural thought: a mysticism that cannot be explained away—as some have done—by recourse to arguments for a lag between technological advances and social organization, or worse, to the fiction of a tectonic rationality emerging out of a romanticism eventually shed, like the hangovers of another era.

But let me contrast European High Modernism with Palestine, since this pairing is actually instructive vis-à-vis the triumph of modernism. If one looks to the example of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, for example, it is evident that in Weimar Germany the public as a whole was relatively unaware of, felt indifferent to, or was downright suspicious of intellectuals' claims concerning art and architecture's immediacy to politics. (Walter Benjamin famously described the *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a bluff, suggesting that its claims to immediacy were much like the Baron Münchhausen's assertion that he pulled himself out of the bog by his own hair). In this sense, high modernism is wimpy if judged by the criterion of its demand for a "phrenological" formal politics in the context of universal mediation.

By contrast, what is so striking about the interpretation of architecture in the political history of Israel/Palestine is that participants in and observers of this struggle assumed the monument's adequacy to history to be self-evident. Though cognizant of the problems of representation, ideology, mediation...they nevertheless advance arguments concerning the *nature* of architecture's adequacy to politics. In *their* modernism, the proximate relation of architecture to actuality is so complete that it *explains* history, requiring no historical explanation. (There are really good historical reasons for this, as I try to show in the book. I discuss political actors whose intellectual projects necessarily began with the demystification of religious invocations of the "concrete" in order to advance secular, political demands for architecture's identification with the history for which it nominally stands). Pointing beyond the arguments for modernism in the Weimar claims for the concrete—which emerged in the political opponents "mutually-assessed mutual assessment"—ratifies an abstract actuality all the more successfully. The interpretation of a conflict became a constitutive factor in its perpetuation.

**What about the Cold War? Do you see that as an analogous situation?**

Absolutely. But the "strategic interaction" of Cold War politics elucidates the points about modernism I've just raised. In the case of the Cold War, two actors in opposition—and their surrogates—arrived at a common thematization of reality. This has been written about by deterrence theorists and political scientists like Robert Jervis in his famous *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, or Thomas Schelling in his *Strategy of Conflict*, or Waltz in his *Man, the State and War*. Viewed through the lens of Goffman's *Strategic Interaction*—another classic of the era—one could say that despite their important disagreements, these students of politics (and I think they're really theorists of gestures) advance a view in which states are performative entities and subjects are strategic beings—strategic subjects/performative states. But as unlikely as it may seem given the commonly-held view that there is a direct correlation between modernism and development, this kind of strategic interaction was already old-hat in the 1960s in Israel and Palestine. In very specific ways, by 1967 it had been taken to two levels of abstraction higher than the classic gestural brinksmanship that one witnesses in U.S./Soviet relations. Let me add that I'm not unaware of the fact that the stakes were obviously much higher in the Cuban missile crisis, for example, than in the build up to the war of June 1967 in the Middle East. But viewed in light of the categories of political comportment advanced by the deterrence theory of its own time, what had been taking place in the Middle East during its modern history far exceeded the "logic" to which these thinkers tried to assign a name.

This advanced strategic comportment fascinates me, and I guess this is why I find the question about the Cold War so compelling; the relation is itself the focus of one of my current research projects, which I think of as the continuation of *An Aesthetic Occupation*. This book is tentatively entitled *The Politics of Retrospection: Framing Middle East History in the Aftermath of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War*. It looks at the immediate aftereffects of the hostilities of 1967 and especially at the way political actors sought to identify the causes of their new historical situation during a period that would eventually come to be known as the "era of euphoria" in Israel, and the "great setback" in the Arab world. This investigation builds on the methods of *An Aesthetic Occupation* by chronicling how parties to this conflict made sense of their opponents' attempts to make sense of the causes of war. However, while the first volume records the way political actors tried (without much suc-

cess) to postulate the political instrumentality of symbols and images in explanations of violence, this work examines a subsequent generation's efforts to locate the causes of war in the *self-image* of the peoples involved. (And more specifically, in the *self-image* of political actors betrayed in their own assessments of their *opponent's* self-image). If this sounds abstract, it is because those involved in explaining a new political reality actually advanced an abstract politics: from Sadiq al-'Azm's *Self-Criticism After the Defeat*, to assessments of these assessments such as Yehoshafat Harkabi's *Arab Lessons From Their Defeat*, to immanent critiques of the Israeli meta-critical position (like the young Edward Said's "The Arab Portrayed"), arguments implicating the self-image of one's opponent in the instigation of violence advanced a new consensus concerning the nature of historical change.

**How does the idea of allegory come into play in your book?**  
I guess the short answer might be this: in the ways in which the political actors themselves debate, theorize, and advance arguments for the role of architecture in their own political reality, they reveal a constitutive relation between allegory and history. But this is a remarkably complex relation. Here, allegory is not merely taken to mean the concatenation of conventional symbols—the "extended symbol" that would explain, for example, what is signified by the features of the statue of Jose de San Martin's statue at the entrance to Central Park: a sword up or a sword down, a horse rearing or with its head bent down, the hero touching his cap, and looking to the east or west, etc. Rather, what I'm exploring in *An Aesthetic Occupation* is a relation to allegory far less estranged from collective experience than the one I've just described; the way in which the political actors whose adventures I tell understand and advance their own understanding of their own historical circumstances discloses itself as having a concrete relationship to *time* that is the same as the one we have come to describe in allegory. In a tradition of thinking originating in Georg Lukacs and elaborated in Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history that sees allegory first, as a charnell-house of long-rotted interiorities, and then, as the *via negativa* to revolutionary experience, it is a cipher language of history. ("From the standpoint of death, the product of the corpse is life," Benjamin instructs the reader of his *Trauerspiel* study).

**In the conclusion of your book you make a strong claim about ethics. Could you expand upon it?**

First, let me say that the conclusion of *An Aesthetic Occupation* is a work of self-criticism. (I should add that this

is a critique that is much harsher than any of the reviews of this book I've read to date). But I am not in any sense offering this gesture of self-criticism as a pragmatic model for an ethics. This is not a book that suggests that the identification of a problem is a step in its resolution. Instead, like others before me, I'm suggesting that critique is its own end. And critique of a particular kind: a critique that is inherently negative in its orientation, in the sense that it displays "intransigence towards all reification"—as Adorno once described the task of his own negative dialectics. Such intransigence does not only extend to assertions that history fulfills itself in stone, but also to claims concerning the successful and complete demystification of such assertions. The ethical imperative I raise lies precisely in *An Aesthetic Occupation's* own unfinished business. If in this work I suggest that the claim of architecture's political immediacy signals the violent success of an impossible understanding of history-as-reconciled-existence, then far more important would be to show that the possibility of, and the legitimate demand for, a reconciled existence survives in our failure to articulate the *impossibility* of reconciliation in this one.

**Could you speak a little about the structure of your book? Why do you move from "stone," to "tile," to "paper," and to "celluloid?" Are you suggesting "the march of the world spirit?"**

Well, I *am* suggesting a kind of progression, but I am not in any sense suggesting that it coincides with the "march of the world spirit." If I trace how modes of historical self-presentation advanced towards greater complexity of abstraction, it is not with the aim of implying a drive towards ever greater universality. This is the case in the *Phenomenology*, which culminates with Spirit's self-cognizance as Absolute Knowing, or in subsequent materialist versions that posited the completion of thought in the proletariat's self-cognizance as the subject/object of History. The dynamic I present corresponds with something closer to an effort to "keep up appearances" in the face of repeated challenges to those whose political task is to "keep up appearances"...i.e., to articulate the relation between "facts" on the ground and facts "on the ground." In historical terms, "stone," "tile," "paper," and so on are just shorthand terms for that process.

The book begins with a history of the argument that holy sites are instantiations of revelation. The portion called "stone" documents how this position was eclipsed by another that emerged precisely in expressions of skepticism concerning the first. In the critique of the adequacy of mon-



uments to history advanced in religious devotion, a belief in the adequacy of architecture to history was sustained all along...in the assertion that in their "untruth" as authentic holy sites they are true instantiations of secular *realpolitik*. There are corresponding claims in "Tile"—that the true state of affairs could be discerned by the way one's opponents used architecture—that is, treated it as the covering image for their own political imperatives. So, we pass from a magical theory of adequation to an operative one. After the riots that took place in Palestine in 1929, this tenuous, but normative understanding of the relation of architecture to politics also collapsed. Now, parties to this conflict would argue that history presents itself directly in the untruth of one's opponents' claims for the uses of monuments. This is why, in the section entitled "Paper," I present the history of the arguments advanced by representatives for the Zionist and Palestinian leadership before a Parliamentary commission of inquiry on the causes of the violence of 1929. By this point, parties to this conflict resort to a remarkable argument: "history inheres in the way that that guy says I use monuments." They point to actual pictures of shrines in order to make this case. If I suggest that this is a movement towards abstraction, it is because I think it is incumbent upon us to ask: what is the character of a history in which political leaders, arguing for the very possibility of their constituents' existence in a country, find themselves obligated to theorize about what pictures mean? How do they find themselves resorting to a kind of art criticism? While many political histories have normalized this question into oblivion by treating the images as "propaganda"—that is, as merely contingent upon a political imperative taking place less abstractly elsewhere—I focus instead on the fact that nobody has been able to articulate what those larger political imperatives are without resorting to these precise claims for the immediacy of architecture to history—this time, as something utterly contingent upon a politics it is supposed to name.

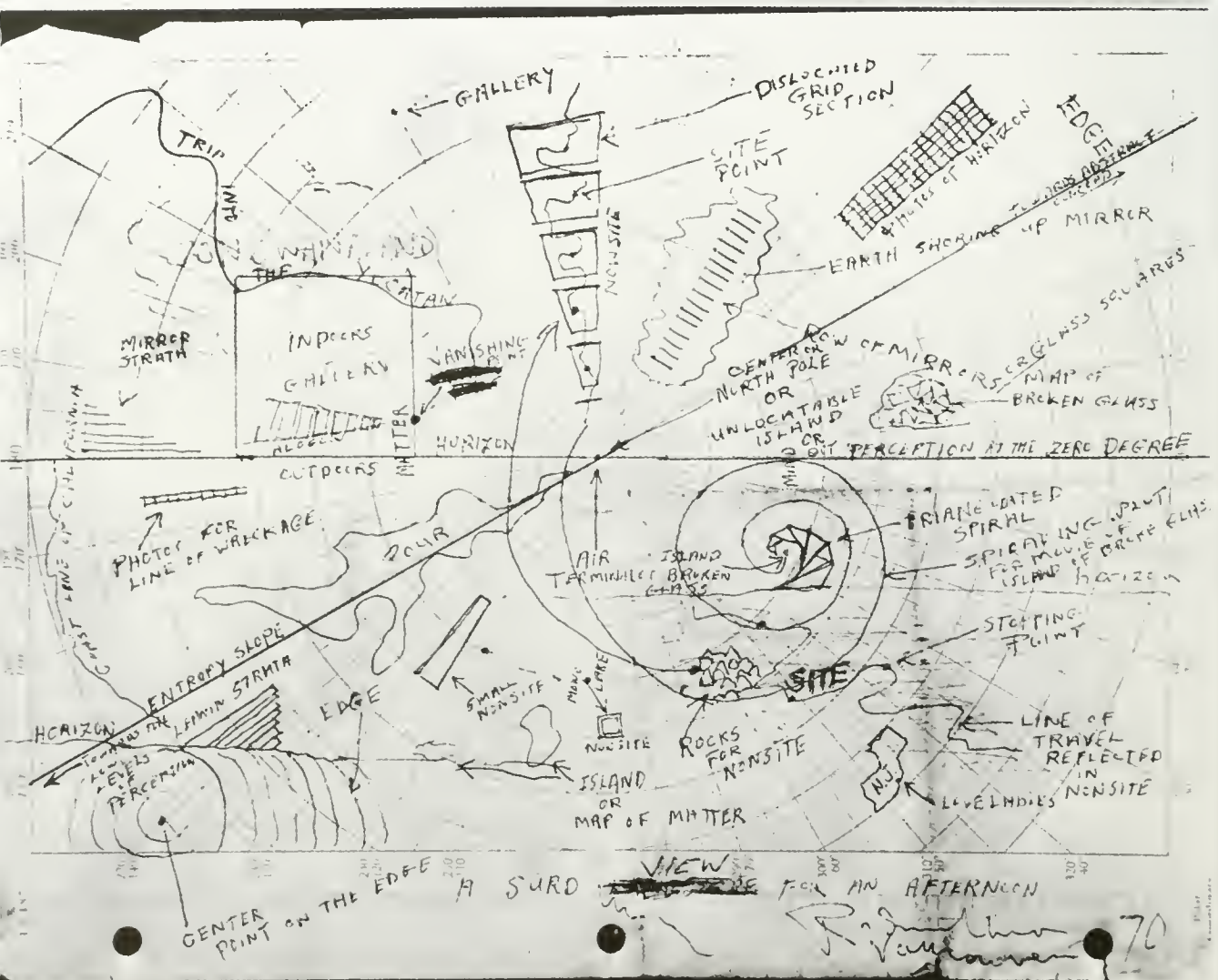
**What can you tell us about your current work? How does it relate to the themes found in this book?**

*An Aesthetic Occupation* connects with a crucial moment in the history of the gesture. I wasn't completely aware of this as I was writing it. In another of the projects I'm currently developing, I am trying to present the history of the gesture in a novel way informed by what I've learned so far: that is, tracing the history of the gesture by examining the epistemological frameworks in which it presented itself as an urgent problem. I start with Winkelman and Lessing who were asking themselves whether some poor sculpture was

suffering its pain in calm repose or not, since for them the possibility of a modern theory of expression would be contingent upon the answer. Following romantic theories of sentimentality to the origins of modern psychology, I connect these (by virtue of their subsequent rejection of psychological "parallelism") to the sociology of Herbert Mead and his notion of "symbolic interaction." It is a short step from here to the modern politics of the Cold War and to the issues we discussed a little while ago, by which political actors expended huge intellectual efforts to arrive at a reliable understanding of gesture. Combining Mead's notion of a "conversation of gestures" with Charles Sanders Peirce's pragmaticist understanding of language, political scientists would attempt to find a way to arrive at a "taxonomy" capable of distinguishing between "phony" and "real" gestures (they called the former signals and the latter indexes). The critique of this kind of "taxonomy" was advanced by Erving Goffman, who, in treating the dramaturgy of such gestures, rejected the implicit claims of symbolic interactions concerning the "uses" of images in political experience. He suggested instead that the belief in uses was itself a gesture of agency. In *An Aesthetic Occupation*, I did not know that I was looking at a part of this history, but I'm quite eager to pursue it.

**So what relationships have you been finding between aesthetics and politics in your current research?**

For the last number of years, I've been looking at the aesthetics implicit in practical political life, particularly the theories of figuration presupposed in modern politics. When I open a work of political science, I often discover that important and credible theories of politics hold presumptions concerning representation that were abandoned at the end of the eighteenth century by credible students of aesthetics. I don't say this to indict them, but to suggest that I've been trying to understand the epistemological horizons of political actors and their interpreters. At the same time, as circumstances have led me to delve deeply into politics and political thought, I have the uncomfortable sense that the humanities have all too often relied on vulgar reductions of politics, and more specifically, on conceptions of power as an undifferentiated absolute. I am increasingly more curious and skeptical about this tendency, as it has been advanced in recent and current arguments about the way culture—visual, material, etc.—constitutes a nexus of power. My concern is that this identification of politics-qua-power may signal, more than anything else, a way in which we pay tribute to our own renunciation and even extract a certain *frisson* from it.



## CAROLINE JONES MINING THE LODE

The tongue  
Did burst  
Into a Bloody Word....  
From a ruptured  
Blood vessel  
Comes a prayer

—Robert Smithson, "From the City," unpublished poem, ca. 1960<sup>1</sup>

A degraded paradise is perhaps worse than a degraded hell. America abounds in banal heavens, in vapid "happy-hunting grounds," and in "natural" hells like Death Valley...or The Devil's Playground.... The abysmal problem of gardens somehow involves a fall from somewhere or something. The certainty of the absolute garden will never be regained.

—Robert Smithson, footnote to "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," 1968 [RS 113]

Sifting through Smithson, one navigates stratigraphic layers. Not the least of which are the data files accumulating over the years: his essays, the unpublished/now published poetry, the reviews of other artists' works, the interviews. Then, there are the chunkier layers: the collages, the crumpled sheets documenting unrealized projects, the slide-shows in their battered cardboard mounts, the stashes of Instamatic prints, the brittle photostats. The built earthworks are just part of the palimpsest: crusting up again out of the Great Salt Lake, or dropping back under the flow; looming over the sand quarry at Sonsbeek or plowed under by the administrators at Kent State. Although privileged by art history, their stratigraphy is just part of the story; they are crumbling, gone, or stubbornly resistant to the miner's pick. The Smithson lode, like breccia, is an aggregate of the organic and the inorganic, compounded materials dragged

from different times and places, annealed under intense pressure. But, in his own words,

no materials are solid, they all contain caverns and fissures.... Words and rocks contain a language that follows a syntax of splits and ruptures. Look at any *word* long enough and you will see it open up into a series of faults, into a terrain of particles each containing its own void.<sup>2</sup> [RS 107]

The fissures are crucial to our project of finding the spiritual Smithson. That author-function will never be found "intact," but always in the interstices of the aggregate, threaded by gnosis and larded with doubt.

The archaeological and geological practices engaging the Smithson reader/viewer are entirely appropriate, replicating the activities of an artist/theorist for whom text was material to be heaped, piled, accumulated, and pushed around. "Earthwords," Smithson called Edgar Allan Poe's prescient evocation of earthworks in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, 1850:

Nothing worth mentioning occurred during the next twenty-four hours, except that, in examining the ground to the eastward third chasm, we found two triangular holes of great depth, and also with black granite sides.<sup>3</sup> [RS 108]

Words were as material as earth, and dirt as fluidly constructed as discourse. Regardless of what they signified for Poe, triangular holes were one of the options for artists Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Robert Morris, and others whose work Smithson illustrated and discussed. But Smithson declined this ancient iconic form and the cubic

obsessions of Minimalism (the cube a vestige of late-modernism). For Smithson, it was the spiral, the labyrinth, and the vortex that figured his desire.

...unlike those monuments of the past which evolved out of the matrix of beliefs and religions of their time, the *Spiral Jetty* came into existence as the individual vision of a single artist.<sup>4</sup>

Such market-driven fantasies of authorial integrity are posthumous, imposed on a more complex author-function emerging specifically as "Smithson" from the permeation of individual intention by dispersed, communal, or aggregative authorial functions. Larger social units fueled and produced the mature work we nominate as "Smithsons:" road trips, filmmaking, sample collecting, "jobbing out," delegated photography, and even virtuosic bulldozer crews and aerial surveys. Smithson was a culminating author, but only in the Benjaminian sense of an author-as-producer, in this case, a productive theorist of experience:

In June 1968, my wife Nancy, Virginia Dwan, Dan Graham, and I visited the slate quarries in Bangor-Ben Argyll, Pennsylvania. Banks of suspended slate hung over a greenish-blue pond at the bottom of a deep quarry. All boundaries and distinctions lost their meaning in this ocean of slate and collapsed all notions of gestalt unity. The present fell forward and backward into a tumult of "de-differentiation," to use Anton Ehrenzweig's word for entropy.... How can one contain this "oceanic" site?... The container is in a sense a fragment itself, something that could be called a three-dimensional map. Without appeal to "gestalts" or "anti-form," it actually exists as a fragment of a greater fragmentation. It is a three-dimensional *perspective* that has broken away from the whole, while containing the lack of its own containment. [RS 110-111]

Here, Smithson's spiral moved *out*, away from the omphalos of the sacrosanct studio, away from the city-system, and, referentially, away from the gallery's white cube. The Non-sites, in the gallery, and their dialectic with the Site, at an absent, industrially disrupted periphery, held the art world system tenuously in place, but only as a relay for experience and concept, part of the "back-and-forth" that interested Smithson.

The site is a place where a piece should be but isn't. [RS 250]

As the idea for the *Spiral Jetty* took form, the art world system became a discursive construct: "I'm not really discontent. I'm just interested in exploring the apparatus I'm being threaded through."<sup>5</sup> The spiral was the figure for that threading: the spiraling of celluloid through the projector, the spiraling of salt crystals in their molecular lattice, the oral and aural "spiral ear" referenced in Brancusi's sketch of James Joyce.

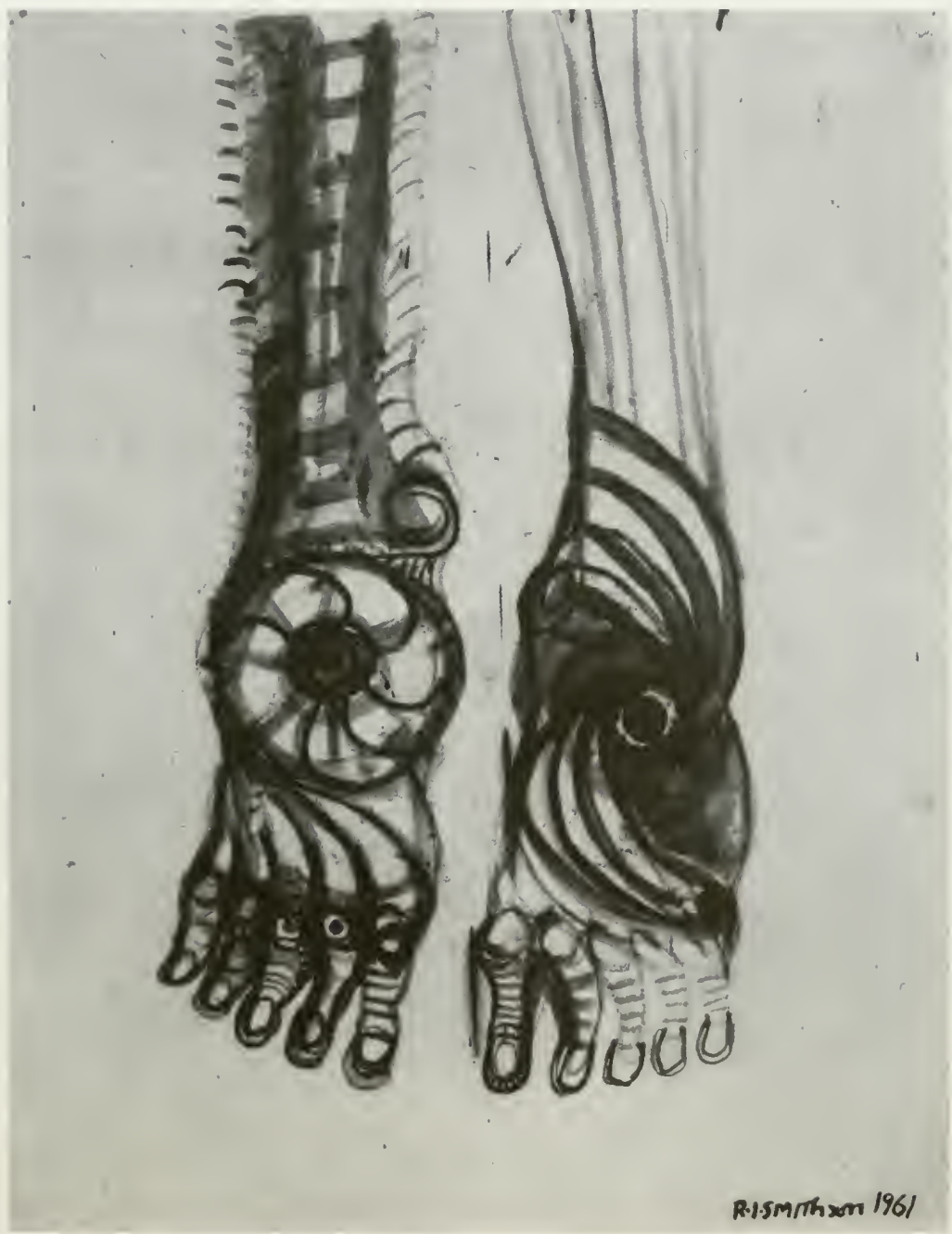
In my argument, the spirals began sensationally for Smithson as *stigmata*—wormholes between Enlightenment rationality and the ancient symbolism of blood and passion, violently shuttling the Catholic boy from his New Jersey pew to the "Gothic" sensibilities of a million backyards. He drew spirals on the feet of Christ, latticed like a spider's web. These early drawings, exhibited in Smithson's first one-man show in Rome, showed the spiral tunneling inward, downward, into the body of the Christ, down to the bedrock of crucifixion, uncertain and endlessly incomprehensible.

Art was never objectified during the Ages of Faith; art was an "act" of worship. Icons would never be "looked" at like a tourist looks at an *objet d'art*... Jackson Pollock and other American "action" painters have restored something of the ritual life of art.... The rituals that Pollock discovered in the Hopi religion and Navajo sand-painting exist also in the outskirts of New York City. Penitential fires are built on Halloween in the dim regions of the suburbs, burning inside the rotting Jack-O'-Lantern with glowing hollow eyes, nose, and mouth.<sup>6</sup> [RS 321 and 323]

As he did for so many other American artists, Pollock seemed to show the way. "A chance comparison between Georges Rouault and Pollock indicates 'inner' and 'outer' obsessions between the European and the American." [RS 321] But the path between the spiral of the stigmata and the spiral of the *Jetty* was itself elliptical, vortexual, and full of self-fashioning moves.<sup>7</sup> Smithson's trip to Rome for his first one-man show in 1961 was more determinative. It turned the screw of a developing crystalline structure and initiated the tropism toward geometry that would bracket the oceanic and the spiritual (for a while):

At that time I really wasn't interested in doing abstractions. I was actually interested in religion, you know, and archetypal things, I guess interested in Europe.... William Burroughs' *Naked*





*Lunch*,... Mallarmé and Gustave Moreau and that kind of thing.... It all seemed to coincide in a curious kind of way. [RS 282]

The “façade of Catholicism” that obsessed Smithson at the time wound itself into a picture of decadent sexuality and confronted him in Rome with its excessive display. The façade parted to reveal baroque layers of corruption, labyrinthine catacombs, and perverse desires. The spiral became a worm within the body of the church; “a snake chewing a penis” was its homoerotic symptom.<sup>8</sup> Thus, a dialectic formed between erotica and geometry characterized by Smithson’s immediate post-Rome production, a set of exercises he described as “sort of like cartouches.” Here, homoeroticism was banished to the peripheries or bracketed by geometric borders. In one telling cartouche, the periphery is polymorphously sexualized, the center an erotic vortex. Only the boundary is “pure,” a crystalline set of nested hexagons. Their segments are taken in sequence to form a triangulated spiral that appears again in the first “earthwork,” an aerial sculpture commissioned for the runway bordering the Dallas-Fort Worth airport.

So my trip to Rome was sort of an encounter with European history as a nightmare.... And the real breakthrough came once I was able to overcome this lurking pagan religious anthropomorphism. I was able to get into crystalline structures in terms of structures of matter and that sort of thing.... I was doing crystalline type work and my early interest in geology and earth sciences began to assert itself over the whole cultural overlay of Europe. I had gotten that out of my system. [RS 283, 284, and 286]

Through the crystalline, the spiral could reassert itself. No longer scandalously homoerotic, no longer simply eschatological, no longer merely geometric, it knit these strata together. Like magma flowing through the interstices of a compacted situation, it crystallized as a boundary that incorporated the fragments of its own violent passage through the organic.

I mean I never really could believe in any kind of redemptive situation. I was fascinated with Gnostic heresies, Manicheism, [*sic*] and the dualistic heresies of the East.... I guess there was a tug of war going on between the organic and the crystalline.... Actually, I think they kind of met—a kind of dialectic occurred later on, so both areas were resolved. [RS 286 and 290]

Smithson’s early, unpublished poems are heart-rending—remarkably, they remained unpublished, even through the celebrity of the *Spiral Jetty* and its sudden precipitate, global fame. “Joining with the myth of the machine,” he penned around 1960, “The rebel / Expects to be damned by rust”—dust unto dust became rust unto rust as his spiral took the binary of nature/technology and pulverized it.

You know, one pebble moving one foot in two million years is enough action to keep me really excited. But some of us have to simulate upheaval, step up the action. Sometimes we have to call on Bacchus. Excess. Madness. The End of the World. Mass Carnage. Falling Empires. [RS 251]

Entropy became the engine of this final figuration, the architect of a final spiraling path. Its slow arc looked like Nature. Was this the solution, a postmodern pastoral?

Nature is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. [Pascal, as quoted in RS 27]

The solar system’s slow swan song, the “heat death” of the universe—an obsession of science in the 1960s, was only one part of the spiral. The interstitial spirituality of Smithson was equally dependent on the figure of technology—studied with rust and mechanical “dinosaurs,” but sutured into the very order of Nature. Technology, the artist claimed, was part of “Human Nature.” Thus, part of the dialectic’s resolution lay in the deep logic of the pastoral, in which the flight from the marketplace is always necessarily indexed to the market’s genres and structures of value. The pastoral, in turn, was inflated by a post-Apollo techno-scientific gigantism, the sudden vision of an Earth suspended with its veil of atmosphere in an inky infinite. In bounded chaos, massive scale, and geological timeframes, Smithson found the right optic from which to view the institutionalized religion that “haunted”—as he described it—his early work.

The refuse between mind and matter is a mine of information. [RS 107]

Mining the lode will continue to churn the strata, yielding further Smithsons from the spirals of compacted discourse. Many of those nuggets can be turned to reveal a spiritual sheen.

## NOTES

1 Robert Smithson, "From the City," ca. 1960, published posthumously in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 317. Hereinafter RS.

2 Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," *Artforum* (September 1968).

3 Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, 1850, Chapter XXIII, as quoted by Smithson in "Sedimentation."

4 "Biographical Note," unsigned (but probably by the artist's widow, earthwork artist Nancy Holt), in Robert Smithson, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, edited by Nancy Holt, with an introduction by Philip Leider (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 5.

5 Bruce Kurtz, "Conversation with Robert Smithson on April 22, 1972," *The Fox* II (1975) in RS 262.

6 Smithson, "The Iconography of Desolation," c. 1962, remained unpublished until long after his death. The first scholar to gain access to these unpublished materials was Eugenie Tsai, who published this essay in *Robert Smithson Unearthed: Drawings, Collages, Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 61-68.

7 This trajectory is laid out more fully in Caroline Jones, *Machine in the Studio:*

*Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and most recently, in Caroline Jones, "Preconscious/Posthumous Smithson: The Ambiguous Status of Art and Artist in the Postmodern Frame," *Res* 41 (Spring 2002).

B Smithson references the Michelangelesque figure in the posthumously published "What Really Spoils Michelangelo's Sculpture," Tsai, 1991, 73. The figure is borrowed again in Smithson's cartouche drawing, *Untitled (Second-Stage Injector)*, 1963. See the essay "Preconscious/ Posthumous Smithson," supra. The penis/snake spiral is taken from Michelangelo's skewering of his enemies in the papal curia. The figure of Minos, Prince of Hades, in the lower right corner of *The Last Judgment*, apparently bore an uncanny resemblance to Michelangelo's enemy Biagio da Cesena, the master of ceremonies in the papal court. Da Cesena had called the top half of the unfinished Judgment a "*stufa d'ignudi*" when it was shown to intimates in 1540.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Robert Smithson, *A Sord View for An Afternoon*, 1970.

Fig. 2: Robert Smithson, *Feet of Christ*, 1961.

FERNANDO DOMEYKO  
CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CENTER IN  
LAS BRISAS DE SANTO DOMINGO, CHILE







The temple is both subjective and objective. Its use is ultimately internal to the visitor and its program is effective silently and personally. The temple is also a dynamic representation of society, not for aesthetic or historical reasons, but rather, it acts as a mirror to the shifting attitudes of a culture in a much more accurate and immediate manner than other building types.

Though the tectonic elements of the Church at Las Brisas are critical to understanding its realization, the design is ultimately an investigation of the program—it seeks to clarify the essence of a meditative act. The clarification here devel-

oped from a consideration of how elemental forces physically manifest, as one hopes to experience spiritual forces through the act of meditation.

The church in Las Brisas de Santo Domingo moderates these physical experiences to facilitate meditation. It is near a forest of boldo trees, a native species with leaves traditionally used for making a purifying, healing potion. It lies in the path of both the sun and the wind. These were tectonic decisions which allow the visitor to feel the life of the building and the larger set of relationships of which they are a part.

The meditative aspects of the church were further clarified through light—not through the manipulation of light, but through the exploration of a specific kind of light. The intention was to harness a quality of light—like a memory and the identification of memory—in order to create an environment conducive to reflection. Likewise, the collaboration with Kurt Wagner from Bose allowed for an investigation of sound as a bendable force, focused in the service of the program. When people and music fill the space, the building works as a musical instrument to enhance the experience rather than dictate it.

The building process itself brought an illumination and discovery only realizable through the act of construction, when the forces of the building began to reveal themselves. In this particular case, the crew embraced the spirit of the process. Careful examination of craftsmanship became superfluous, and the catalyst to action, "I don't need to watch you, God watches you," seems to have taken on a collective understanding.

Ultimately, the goal was not to design, make, and construct forms for their own sake, but rather to ensure that every element of the building was "working." The whole building then becomes activated and no element is on "vacation." The austerity of the elements in action complements rather than competes with the nature of the meditative experience.

To connect ideas and experiences, one must allow the architectural elements to begin a dialogue. It is not what we project or plan, but what we become—what we actually do and make—and what we may ultimately learn from the dialogue that arises. The idea of meditation was here all the time—a meditation through physics to open a way to God, a happy God. The building is less about the architect than what is best for the building as a work for God. This is a spiritual attitude, but not a religious one. It allows the ultimate meditative question to arise: "What kind of spirit moves us?"











## JESUS MARIA APARICIO GUISADO CHURCH IN ANDALUSIA



The church is located on the outskirts of Cordoba in Spain on an anonymous avenue with newly constructed Mediterranean-style houses on one side, and a shopping center on the other. Although the city has a rich cultural history, the site does not reveal it. Rather than orient the church along the conventional east-west axis, we turned the structure away from the built environment, and orient-

ed the altar and pulpit towards the south. The solitary view from the church surveys a distant mountain range to the north, passing over the immediate surroundings. The exterior of the church emphasizes solidity, a defensive hermetic seal against a setting without memorable references. This solidity is achieved through the construction of pure volumes.



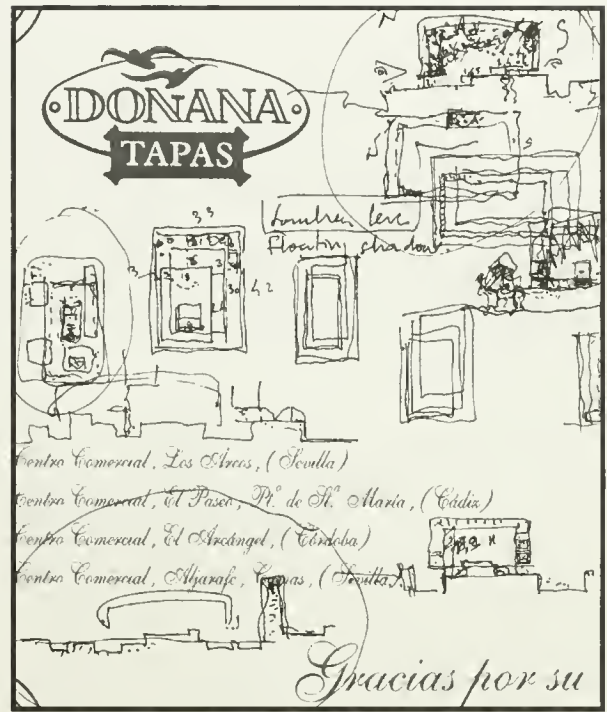
A large rectangular podium signifies the earth. It was conceived as a base for the fall of a shadow, that of the church itself. The planes of the podium and of the church are held apart by a lightweight, almost imperceptible structure; a strip of light connects the two volumes and a shadow settles between them.

Light, shadow, and color model the interior space of the church. The upper plane of the podium is carved by the light, and the space contained within the "floating" walls is shaped by these three elements. The space is thus held within the shadow of the strong light of the Andalusian sun. A low light filters in from between the two volumes of space, illuminating the interior evenly. The interior wall is punctuated with colored light. Openings on the west wall are painted red; on the east, blue; and the southern apertures, where the altar is located, remain unpainted to retain the natural yellow or white light. These colors will accentuate the natural tones of the atmosphere at those hours when light passes through them, following the passage of the sun.

The color will play a role in the liturgy as well. On the eastern end of the southern wall, behind the altar, a niche holds the figure of the Virgin of Hope. She is draped in green light, the liturgical color of hope, and faces the morning sun. This green results from a mixture of the blue from the east and the natural yellow from the south and will change in hue throughout the day. In the early morning, the niche will become deep blue; as the sun moves throughout the day, the yellow-white will intensify. A tabernacle situated on the western corner will change from a yellow-orange in the morning to red as the afternoon progresses.

The celebrant is seated on the podium alongside the altar, or place of sacrifice, and the pulpit. The visual focus of the service then becomes the natural light. Spaces carved into the podium plane provide for specific sacraments; the worshippers assemble on a lower plane to give emphasis to the podium.

In order to support the large interior space designed to hold about four hundred people, we constructed the main sanc-



tuary with a prefabricated concrete "waffle-like" space-frame structure. The frame lines the eastern and western interior walls and the deep units of the frame provide peripheral spaces of occupation; the frame also modulates the interior shadows, fracturing the light from above and below, casting shadows that move over the course of the day.

Our proposal for the Church in Andalusia emphasizes the expression of limits and the breaking of boundaries that form these limits through light. The church is divided into spaces of transition where we are able to pass from one spatial reality to another. This space of shade in Andalusia provides a refuge from the Mediterranean sun, yet registers the passing of time and the changes of the day for those inhabiting the shadows in quietude and prayer.





MARK JARZOMBKE  
BELLOTTO'S DRESDEN:  
FRAMING THE DIALECTICS OF PORCELAIN

In 1978, pieces from Dresden's famous art and porcelain collections went on exhibition in Washington D.C., New York, and San Francisco.<sup>1</sup> The backdrop of the exhibition was, of course, the devastating fire bombing of Dresden by the Allies in World War II, and the subsequent consolidation of East Germany into a socialist state. In all candor, Manfred Bachmann, Director of the State Art Collections in Dresden, wrote in the accompanying catalogue that the Dresden collections were "in the hands of the working class" whose "socially-oriented policies...have created new museums in the framework of the reconstructed cultural centers of the city on the Elbe."<sup>2</sup> *The Splendors of Dresden*, as the exhibition was called, was heavily funded by the IBM Corporation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and was thus a victory for the champions of détente. Though Bachmann meant for the "reconstructed cultural centers" to point to the much-anticipated transformation of Dresden into a modernized city, he also referred to the attempt to rebuild the heavily-damaged Zwinger and Semper Galleries. In fact, one of the purposes of the exhibition was to draw attention to the desires of both the East and West for a re-energized museum culture. For this reason, the exhibition was staged as part of the opening celebration of I.M. Pei's new East Wing of the National Gallery. To make the theme of renewal even stronger, the exhibition included a true-to-scale reconstruction of the interior of one of Dresden's most noted exhibition spaces, the "Green Vault," a fortified, sixteenth-century treasure room where Dresden's former monarchical rulers housed the most precious pieces of their porcelain collection. In reality, the Green Vault, which had been heavily damaged during World War II, was not in use and the plans for its restoration were sketchy at best. It was therefore not without some degree of irony that the simulated version of what Dresdeners might very much

have wanted to see restored was on display in a building that was far more expressive of modernist ideals than what was then being built in East Germany.

The East German curators who authored the catalogue availed themselves of this opportunity to construct within the framework of the show a condensed history lesson about the city of Dresden, a lesson designed as a play on the theme of the East-West exchange. Its articulation began with the first piece described in the catalogue in an essay by Joachim Menzhausen, director of the Green Vault: Bernard Bellotto's *Dresden from the Right Bank of the Elbe, 1748* (Fig. 2). Painted, according to Menzhausen, in a "scientifically exact" manner, it shows the city before the "bombardment."<sup>3</sup> The bombardment to which the catalogue refers was, however, not that which took place in 1945, but rather the cannonade of 1760 that took place during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). This war, a world war in its own right, involved all the major European powers and had even spilled over into India and the Americas. Though this paper cannot explore the history of this complicated war, suffice it to say that in 1760, Dresden experienced what local historians still call its "first destruction." To show the devastation, the East German curators pointed to another painting by Bellotto, his *Kreuzkirche* (Church of the Holy Cross, 1765) (Fig. 1). The catalogue's author noted that the church's ruins, "like an open corpse, offer a strong image of the desolation wrought by war."<sup>4</sup>

Menzhausen was assuming that sophisticated readers would see the parallel between the *Kreuzkirche* and the *Frauenkirche*. Following the bombardment of 1945 by the Allied forces, the *Frauenkirche* was left in a state of ruin uncannily similar to that of the near-by *Kreuzkirche* as



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Bellotto had painted it. The two buildings represented nothing less than the dynamic of Dresden's dialectical fate. The Kreuzkirche signified the end of the monarchical world, the Frauenkirche, the end of the bourgeois world. But if the first step of the Dialectic can now be demonstrated only with the help of art history and with the help of an image of "fortunate perfection," as Bellotto's painting was described by Menzhausen, the result of the second step of the Dialectic, namely the destruction of the *Frauenkirche*, had been planned as a permanent visual element in the urban landscape. One should "never lose sight of this apocalyptic picture of our city," read a socialist brochure published just after the war.<sup>5</sup> The ruins remained until the mid-1990s, when reconstruction of the *Frauenkirche* was begun. Until then, it was an anti-memorial to fascism and, by the 1970s, to the cruelty of the allied attack.

To flesh out the logic of Dresden's dialectically charged fate, Menzhausen hinted that the initial attack in 1760 was not unexpected, given that the city had become, in his

view, a mere "romantic chinoiserie" of buildings.<sup>6</sup> The use of these words by the director of the Green Vault to describe Dresden's much admired urban silhouette was particularly biting since socialists, one must recall, saw chinoiserie as a manifestation of the fetishized and alienated life-style of the upper classes. Dresden had been a world center for porcelain products, playful figurines, made in near-by Meissen; they were meant to be collected only (Figs. 3 & 4). Indeed, Dresden's famous ruler, Augustus the Strong (1670-1733), had assembled a collection of over 24,000 pieces of Chinese and Japanese porcelain for his "Japanese Palace" (Fig. 5). Bellotto's *Dresden from the Right Bank of the Elbe*, seen in this context, thus shows us more than just a beautiful city. It is a painting of architecturally scaled chinoiserie, meaning that it was, in the final analysis, as Menzhausen notes, a "symbol for an end."<sup>7</sup>

In positing the fate of Dresden's destruction within the fabric of its monarchical history, the curators were generously deflecting attention from the question of the Allies' guilt for

bombing Dresden. In exchange, the West would have to accept the proposition that Dresden's post-war socialist identity was not something imposed on it by the Russians, but was a logical and internal resolution of its fate. Its destruction was, in a sense, self-proclaimed. This meant that by going to the exhibition and walking through the space of the simulated "Green Vault," Westerners were, in essence, revisiting the pre-dialectical moment of Dresden's history.

But in the process of developing this piece of revisionist diplomacy, the exhibition designers laid an elegant trap for their Western audience, for chinoiserie had certainly not lost



its potency. The Westerners, therefore, were unknowingly, taking in the sweet poison of the Vault's display, and, in admiring it, became unwittingly complicit in their own undoing.

The exhibition thus worked on two levels, one abstract and timeless, the other, real and in the "here and now." Both positioned the narrative of modernity and its "arrival" through the sliding gradations of a precisely calibrated spatio-temporal logic that moved not only between the Green Vault and the East Wing, but also between the tropes of death and destruction. It began with the lively little figurines that had once so effectively foreshadowed Dresden's doom but that now, dusted off, were harbingers of an even grander purpose, a purpose that could be easily disguised under the pretext of an East-West dialogue. The paintings by Bellotto that framed the entire operation, the "before" and the "after" images of the first instantiation of Dresden's Dialectic, were part of the coded prediction of the West's own demise and potential transcendence. Though the poison and the warning labels were in plain view, they could not be deciphered.

However, it was probably all a game which only the Eastern curators could really enjoy. But it was also, no doubt, mixed with sadness, as the Dresden curators, with deteriorating state funding, were neither able to rebuild their Vault to its former splendor nor build a new, modern museum similar to the East Wing. The Western exhibition viewers had both the funding and the building which was why the best that the East German curators could get out of their "Green Vault" was a *trompe-l'oeil* of the historical Dialectic.

## NOTES

1 *The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting, an Exhibition from the German Democratic Republic* was displayed at the National Gallery in Washington from June 1 to September 4, 1978. More than 700 paintings, drawings, prints, porcelains, scientific instruments, arms and armor, bronzes, and jeweled objects were on view. Sent from the collections of Dresden, the exhibit documented the history of art collecting by the rulers of Saxony over a 500-year period. It was organized by the National Gallery in Washington D.C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and it was curated by American and German experts, in particular by Olga Raggio, chairman of the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

2 Manfred Bachmann, "Statement," *The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), 7. Bachmann was the Director General of the State Art Collections in Dresden.

3 Joachim Menzhausen, "Five Centuries of Art Collecting in Dresden," *The Splendor of Dresden*, 24. Menzhausen was the director of the Green Vault in Dresden. The Venetian Bernardo Bellotto (1721-80) was the nephew and pupil of the famous Canaletto. In 1747, he left Venice for Dresden where he was appointed court painter to Frederick Augustus II of Saxony. Bellotto moved to Warsaw in 1767. His best work was done in Dresden where he painted numerous scenes of the city.

4 Angelo Walther, *The Splendor of Dresden*, 70.

5 "Was fanden wir?" *Kultureller Neuaufbau Dresdens* 7 (Dresden: Stadt Dresden, n.d.), 3.

6 Menzhausen, *The Splendor of Dresden*, 24.

7 Ibid.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

From the catalogue for the exhibition, *The Splendor of Dresden: Five Centuries of Art Collecting: An Exhibition from the State Art Collections of Dresden* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978).

Fig. 1: Bernard Bellotto, *Ruins of the Church of the Holy Cross*, 1765, cat. no. 10.

Fig. 2: Bernard Bellotto, *Dresden from the Right Bank of the Elbe*, 1748, cat. no. 5.

Fig. 3: *Mother Monkey with her Young*, Meissen, c. 1730, cat. no. 480.

Fig. 4: *Teapot and Two Teabowls with Saucers, with strapwork painted in silver*, Meissen, c. 1715-1720, cat. no. 473.

Fig. 5: *Lady with Bird on a Perch*, China, Tê-hua, c. 1675-1725, cat. no. 362.





JONATHAN COONEY  
CREATING SACRED SPACE OUTDOORS:  
THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CAMP MEETING IN  
ENGLAND, 1819-1840\*

It was the Loughborough, England Methodist circuit camp meeting of July 30, 1820, and George Jarrat was describing a battle between two "mighty powers" for *Primitive Methodist Magazine*.<sup>1</sup> Jarrat was struck by the similarity of the scene to a military operation. The officers in the field had been unable to call the troops to regroup. Not even the sound of a horn had restored order. The camp meeting had begun as usual: several short sermons followed by the dividing of the crowd into "praying companies," in which seekers of salvation could find encouragement, and perhaps liberty, from their miserable spiritual condition. But when it came time for the prayer companies to turn their attention once more to the preachers, the leaders discovered that neither human voice nor trumpet could disengage the smaller groups:

In one of the prayer companies, the cries of the penitents were so affecting to the praying souls that to attempt to persuade either the one or the other to attend preaching was unavailing. At length, we succeeded in removing the souls in distress, to the distance of about one hundred yards from the preaching stand; and great numbers repaired with them.<sup>2</sup>

When Jarrat left the campground at eight o'clock that evening, "many were still in distress."<sup>3</sup> Multiple preaching stands had been set up, each stand boasting five sermons in both the morning and the afternoon and two in the evening. With the accompanying prayer services, it was difficult to know just how many people received salvation that day, although Jarrat estimated that at least seven thousand were present.<sup>4</sup>

An offshoot of Wesleyan Methodism, the Primitive Methodists argued that the camp meeting—a one-day outdoor revival service—was an effective means of bringing the Gospel to as many people as possible. The camp meeting was invented on the American frontier, where it lasted several days and was associated with enthusiasm and disorder. English camp meetings lasted only one day instead of several days and emphasized prayer rather than preaching. The Primitive Methodists' camp meetings in open fields made it possible for the Movement to claim sacred space, as the Methodists had been excluded from conventional sacred space, first by the established Church, as had all Methodists, and then by the Wesleyan Methodist administration which sought a higher socio-political status.

For the Primitive Methodists, camp meetings became the characteristic means of transmitting the substance of evangelical religion, though regular chapel services became part of their ministry. Known as "Ranters," the Primitive Methodists became a sect and later a denomination. They were "not only small but also homogeneous," drawing their audiences primarily, but by no means exclusively, from the poor, mostly farm laborers between 1820 and 1840—the "heroic age" of Primitive Methodist missionary expansion in England.<sup>5</sup> Class differences and the stresses of industrialization certainly contributed to the popularity of the Primitive Methodists. National and international tensions encouraged thousands of English men and women to seek out the emotional and spiritual release of the camp meetings. Gradually, however, Primitive Methodism surrendered the enthusiasm of the spiritual battlefield for more staid and socially acceptable forms of public worship. By the mid-nineteenth century, Primitive Methodists were part of a chapel-based movement, and by the early twentieth century

ry, they had reconciled with their Wesleyan forebears. The transition from sect to denomination and from worshipping out-of-doors to indoors suggests a familiar pattern of movement from exclusion to inclusion and from the social and religious margins to the mainstream.

The first formal attempt to marginalize the Primitive Methodists occurred in 1807, when the Wesleyan conference forbade camp meetings:

Q. What is the judgment of the Conference concerning what are called camp-meetings?

A. It is our judgment, that even supposing such meetings to be allowable in America, they are highly improper in England, and likely to be productive of considerable mischief and we disclaim all connexion with them.<sup>6</sup>

The power and efficacy of the camp meetings were clearly evident to Hugh Bourne, however, and his enthusiasm for them cost him his place in the old order. In June 1808, Bourne was removed from membership in the Methodist church for preaching to large crowds at organized camp meetings. Hugh and his brother, James, were convinced that worship in the open air was “both methodistical and scriptural,” and thus, solidly within the biblical and Wesleyan traditions.<sup>7</sup> Hugh Bourne argued that camp meetings had an ameliorating effect when scheduled to coincide with parish wakes—bawdy, secular feasts held annually in some communities. He believed that more souls were converted at camp meetings than through all the regular work done on any particular preaching circuit in any given year. His plan was to limit the length of sermons, using the preaching event as a prelude to a period of intense group prayer. He was sure that organizing camp meetings around a variety of activities—preaching, praying, reading from testimonies, etc.—enabled people “to continue the active worship of God, for a course of time, with energy and effect.”<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 1808, after the judgment prohibiting camp meetings, there was an outdoor gathering at Norton, which lasted several days. It was so successful that Bourne felt, “the English camp-meetings were established on an immovable foundation, and could never afterwards be shaken.”<sup>9</sup> Bourne’s movement took on the name Primitive Methodist because “it had been directed towards the revival of primitive or early Methodism by a return to the spirit and methods, especially in the matter of out-door preaching, of

Wesley and his coadjutors.”<sup>10</sup> The name was officially adopted in 1812. By 1820, the Primitives claimed 7,842 members, but by 1850, they boasted 102,222 members, nearly one-third that of the Wesleyans’ 334,458.<sup>11</sup>

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Movement in England, adopted “field preaching” as a form of mass evangelism as early as 1739, when he discovered that his colleague, George Whitefield, was experiencing great success holding services in the open air. Wesley was a product of the rigid and orderly Church of England, an ordained priest and the son and grandson of clergymen. Conducting public worship anywhere but in churches and cathedrals dedicated to such activity seemed almost indecent to him, but Wesley found he could also attract crowds out-of-doors, and field preaching became characteristic of first-generation Methodism. Field preaching brought the Gospel message to the masses, who would not or could not attend holy services in the established church. Just as Wesley himself was shut out of many English pulpits because of his enthusiasm, a rigid, formal, and politically-minded church that seemed to care little for the working class alienated much of the population of England.<sup>12</sup>

Decades later, as the Primitive Methodist ranks swelled after a revived emphasis on field preaching and camp meetings, England still struggled with class differences and social discontent. Food shortages, postwar unemployment, depressed wages, and soaring prices applied increasing pressure to those least able to deal with it. The painfully slow democratization process urged people to strive beyond their social status while constant reminders of its inevitability lingered. The presence of cholera in Leeds in 1832 may have contributed to a tremendous increase in Primitive Methodist membership there, and the disease was probably responsible for adding 250 members to both the Hull and North Shields circuits in just one quarter. The Primitive Methodists in Liverpool gained over nine thousand members in 1849—the largest annual increase in Primitive Methodist history. It is no coincidence that Leeds also had high mortality rates due to cholera by the end of the 1840s.<sup>13</sup>

While the appeal of the Primitive Methodists was not limited to the poor and the working classes, the leadership of the original Wesleyan connection seemed to go out of its way to exclude camp meetings and their adherents from nineteenth-century mainstream Methodism. Jabez Bunting, who emerged as the leader of Wesleyan Methodism from the vacuum left by Wesley’s death in 1791, tried to make

the growing denomination more respectable. Bunting, who was solidly behind the conference's condemnation of camp meetings, sought to relieve the political and financial pressure that the connection was feeling from all sides. On the one hand, groups like the Methodists were frequently accused of being radicals and even subversives during England's hostilities with France. As a religious movement outside the established Church of England, they were in danger of being shut down. On the other hand, money raised within the connection for missionary enterprises had been spent on keeping the Methodist Movement solvent in England. Bunting came to "put his faith in a vision of Methodism as a federation of chapels, serviced by a well-instructed ministry and paid for by a pious and respectable laity."<sup>14</sup>

As John Wesley was excluded from the establishment's churches for his brand of enthusiasm, paradoxically, so were Bourne and the Primitive Methodists alienated and excluded by the attitudes and actions of the Wesleyan leadership. While Bunting and others toiled to raise Methodism to a level of financial privilege and social acceptability which would ensure their vision of ministry, so did Bourne and his associates find themselves creating their own sacred spaces among the masses—the camp meeting.

Because the ordering of English society had long depended on the squire-parson alliance, another characteristic of Bourne's camp meetings should not escape notice: primitive Methodist camp meetings emphasized ministry by the laity. Although the preachers were most likely licensed clergy, the great praying companies were made up of volunteer laity. By 1820, strict guidelines for the organization and implementation of the praying companies had been developed. Camp meeting conductors were charged to see that preaching did not infringe on praying time when the congregation could participate and minister. The prayer time was a chance for those who had been "wounded," as Jarrat observed, to be "saved" through preaching and so carried with it significant importance. For a few years between 1816 and 1818, some Primitive Methodists experimented with making preaching the focus of the camp meetings as in America. The results were disastrous and demoralizing. The praying companies were restored to prominence, and the lay character of the Primitive Methodist ministry was reinforced. The established clergy had no part in these meetings; the laity found and retained the spiritual role.<sup>15</sup>

Other features of camp meetings in England involved the laity's claim of control and space. One of these features was the love feast, a testimonial meeting held in the evening following the day's activities. In addition, ritual marching marked the beginning of the camp meeting. The meetings started with a march through the nearest village or town. They moved from the staging area to the campground while drawing attention to the meeting itself. The marching often began as early as six o'clock in the morning and included singing and preaching along the way. In 1836, a group in Stockport split and marched from opposite ends of the town toward the central marketplace.<sup>16</sup> The singing and preaching drew both supporters and opposition, but the general effect was more like a circus parade. The Primitive Methodists, excluded from the established church and shut out of the Wesleyan connection, found a way to storm English society in a direct and physical manner, "through the street, as a little army sounding for battle."<sup>17</sup>

The vigor of the Primitive Methodist camp meetings did not last, however. Signs of change were evident by 1840, a decade before Bourne's death, when the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* began to print articles about "Salvation meetings," two-hour meetings on Sunday nights that resembled camp meetings but could be held indoors and during the winter.<sup>18</sup> After 1860, camp meetings "contributed more to nostalgia than revivalism," and by 1900, the Primitive Methodists had moved to a chapel-based ministry.<sup>19</sup> The low costs of Primitive Methodism—few debt-ridden chapels and meager preachers' salaries—which may have contributed to its popularity among the lower classes, were gradually undone by the church's institutional drift from its identity as a sect to its status as a denomination. Chapel-building may indeed have drained the Primitive Methodists' spiritual, as well as their financial resources.<sup>20</sup>

Primitive Methodists adopted the camp meeting from the American Methodists who found it to be a useful tool for evangelizing the frontier. But the Primitive Methodists were uncomfortable with the raucous character of the American version, which lasted several days and emphasized fervent evangelical preaching, as correspondent Joshua Marsden recounted for his English readers:

At six o'clock in the evening the horn summons to preaching, after which, though in no unregulated form, all the above means continue until morning; so that go to whatever part of the camp you please, some are engaged in them; yea, and dur-

ing whatever part of the night you awake, the wilderness is vocal with praise.<sup>21</sup>

In America, the Primitive Methodists benefited from expansion west into millions of acres of uncharted space; they claimed sacred space in concordance with the expansion movement, which particularly suited the camp meetings. However, the democratization process was well underway by the time camp meetings became popular in America. The voluntary ministering was as evident in America as in England, but in America, participation in all aspects of the services was voluntary, and by the early nineteenth century, personal expressions of spirituality were the norm. Unlike the Wesleyan connection in England, mainstream American Methodists embraced camp meetings. Camp meetings became standard in American Methodism, but did not become the chief hallmark of the Movement as it did with Primitive Methodism in England.<sup>22</sup> There were other differences:

First, [American] Methodism's most explosive period of growth came before the advent of the camp meeting; the Movement's basic structure was already well established before camp meetings emerged at the turn of the century. Second, large and enthusiastic meetings were a familiar and consistent component of the Methodist Movement throughout the new nation, not only on the frontier.<sup>23</sup>

Hugh Bourne encouraged "conversation preaching," or personal witnessing, as another way in which the laity could engage in spreading the Gospel message. Most scholars of the Wesleyan heritage today recognize that one-on-one contact and ministry within small groups did as much or more to fuel the Methodist Movement as the large-scale operations that were the camp meetings. "Contrary to some impressions," writes Richard Heitzenrater, "most of the occasions when persons 'received' remission of sins or were 'comforted' were those small group meetings, not the large open-air preaching services."<sup>24</sup>

A familiar pattern emerged, however, as the Primitive Methodists enjoyed several decades of phenomenal growth followed by a plateau and decline as they moved away from the very customs which defined their earliest efforts. Nearly twenty years after Jarrat described the Loughborough camp meeting with militaristic overtones in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, another observer of the camp meetings in 1839, described them as possessing "a regularity

which...could not have been accomplished, except by military practice."<sup>25</sup> Regardless of whether the camp meetings were primarily responsible for the growth of the Primitive Methodists, they served as the battlefield on which many Primitive Methodists fought. The recurring use of the battlefield analogy to describe the camp meetings evoked images of vitality, but also drew into focus the tension of the outsider. Open-air preaching was the sacred space they claimed when they could not afford to construct chapels and believed that the mother church had abandoned one of the most sacred spaces of all—"God's own chapel"—and with it a considerable portion of the English populace.

\* For Shelby.

## NOTES

1 George Jarrat, "Loughborough Circuit Camp Meeting," *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1820): 241.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 241-242. A mourner was a person convicted of a sin who had not yet received assurance of salvation. "When sinners, who were listening to the word, felt the arrows of the Almighty stick fast within them, they repaired to the multitude who were praying with the penitents. And so great an effect attended the preaching, and the other praying services, that mourners continued to flock to the praying multitude, in regular succession, as wounded men to an hospital: where numbers found the healing balm of the Redeemer's blood to heal their souls."

4 Ibid.

5 James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey (1825-1875)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 220.

6 "History of the Primitive Methodists," *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1821): 51.

7 Ibid., 52, 76.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 54

10 Joseph Ritson, *The Romance of Primitive Methodism* (London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1909), 96.

11 Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 140-141.

12 Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 98.

13 Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 17, 85.

14 David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7, 107.

15 "On the Progress of Tunstall Circuit," *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (August



1820; Intended as a Substitute for October, 1819): 228-229.

16 J. Bowes, "Work of God in the Keighley Circuit," *The Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1827): 29. Samuel Smith, "Stockport Camp Meeting," *The Primitive Methodist Magazine*, New Series (1836): 427-428.

17 Ibid.

18 "Salvation Meetings," *The Primitive Methodist Magazine*, New Series (1839): 357-358.

19 Obelkevich, 253.

20 Ibid., 222.

21 Joshua Marsden, *The Narrative of a Mission to Nova Scotia*, New Brunswick (1816); Quoted in "On the Mode of Conducting the Worship at the Camp-Meetings in America, &c.," *The Primitive Methodist Magazine* (July 1, 1819): 150.

22 Obelkevich, 227. In spite of the dramatic accounts of English camp meetings and the enthusiasm of the Primitive Methodist leadership for the technique, Obelkevich plays down the significance of the camp meetings. "Despite the notoriety of the camp meeting, it was at most, an occasional event and could not have been the principal evangelistic technique even in the 1820s. By the 1850s, a single camp meeting was regularly scheduled for each village society every year."

23 John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 96.

24 Heitzenrater, 100.

25 S. Smith, J. Lawley, and J. Cheetham, "Manchester Circuit General Camp Meeting," *The Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1839): 359.



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GLAIRE D. ANDERSON  
THE CATHEDRAL IN  
THE MOSQUE AND THE TWO PALACES:  
ADDITIONS TO THE GREAT MOSQUE OF CORDOBA AND  
THE ALHAMBRA DURING THE REIGN OF CHARLES V<sup>1</sup>

The conquest of al-Andalus, the Islamic-ruled portion of the Iberian Peninsula, by the forces of the northern kingdom of Castile began in the thirteenth century after nearly eight hundred years of Islamic political dominance over the Peninsula. Following the Castilian conquest, or *reconquista*, much of the architecture of al-Andalus, religious as well as secular, was appropriated and used with few changes by new Christian patrons. This paper focuses on sixteenth-century additions to the two most famous Islamic monuments of the Iberian Peninsula—the Great Mosque of Cordoba (begun eighth century) and the Alhambra Citadel of Granada (fourteenth century). The monuments are linked by changes wrought during the reign of Charles V, who ruled as King of Spain (r. 1516-56) and as Holy Roman Emperor (r. 1519-56). The dialogue initiated by the juxtaposition of Charles' amendments and the original medieval Islamic architectural contexts invites an exploration of the circumstances in which the projects were conceived and carried out.

PROJECT ONE: THE CATHEDRAL IN THE MOSQUE

The Great Mosque of Cordoba was begun between 784 and 786 on the site of the Visigothic church of S. Vicente, which was likely preceded by a Roman temple (Fig. 2). The Great Mosque was founded by the first Islamic ruler of the Iberian Peninsula, 'Abd al-Rahman I, a member of the Umayyad Dynasty of Syria. Scholars have noted how the Mosque's prayer hall, with its seemingly infinite rows of spoliated columns and capitals surmounted by double arches, fuses visual references to the transplanted dynasty's Syrian identity (the alternating red and white voussoirs for instance) with local Roman and Late Antique materials and techniques (particularly the horseshoe arch) (Figs. 3 & 4).

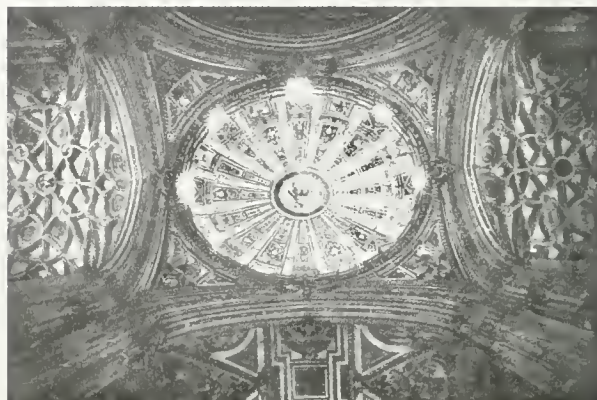
Considered a wonder of the medieval world by both Muslims and Christians, the Great Mosque was the centerpiece of Cordoba, one of the most important urban centers of the medieval Mediterranean.

The Castilian forces of the *reconquista* conquered Cordoba in 1236, although the city was already greatly diminished by the political turmoil that followed the disintegration of the central Umayyad government in the eleventh century. Despite Cordoba's impoverished state, its status as the former capital of al-Andalus lent the city's conquest by the Castilians great symbolic significance. The importance of this victory is demonstrated by Ferdinand III of Castile's consecration of the entire structure of the Great Mosque as the cathedral of Santa Maria Mayor immediately after taking the city. As the repository of an important Muslim relic, the Great Mosque of Cordoba was one of the holiest and most venerable of Muslim sites, and its importance transcended the boundaries of al-Andalus.<sup>2</sup>

The Castilians who settled in Cordoba following the *reconquista* apparently had no qualms about worshipping in the mosque. During the three hundred years in which Christians worshipped there, an agglomeration of small chapels and altars erected around the perimeter of the former prayer hall constituted the main additions to the building. The additions were even articulated using the same basic architectural and decorative forms which had characterized the mosque from its inception, though with the addition of figural sculpture.

A turning point in the history of the building as a site of Christian worship came in 1523 when the Bishop and Canons of the Cordoba Cathedral proposed to construct a new church within the former mosque. The proposal initiated a controversy that placed church officials at odds with the Cordoban town council. Part of the impetus for the project proposed by the Cordoban Bishop was no doubt a desire to compete with more than a century's worth of construction at the new cathedral in nearby Seville.

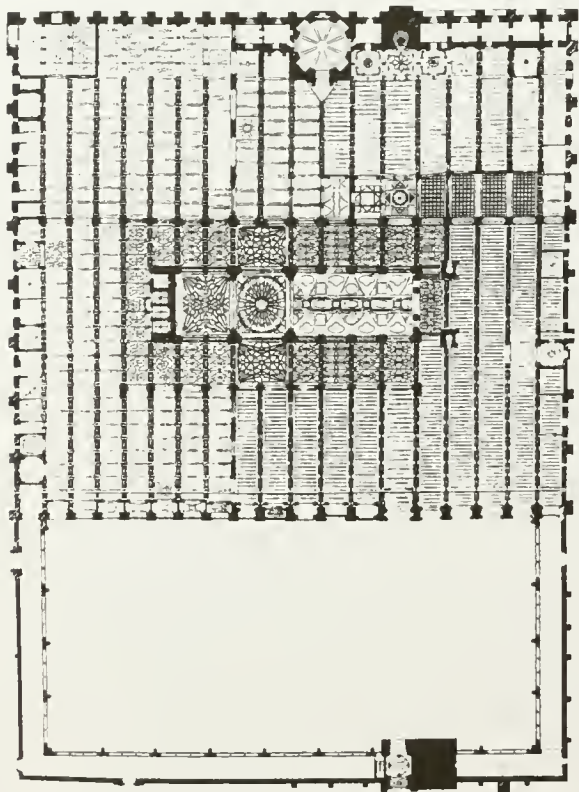
The conquest of Seville by the Castilian forces in 1248, twelve years after the conquest of Cordoba, followed the same pattern of appropriation and adaptation as at Cordoba. After the conquest of Seville, the city's Great Mosque, an enormous hypostyle mosque and courtyard constructed in the twelfth century, was consecrated as the Cathedral of Santa Maria de la Asunción. Like the Mosque at Cordoba, Seville's new Christian congregation used the former mosque with minimal alterations for many years. Extensive earthquake damage in the fourteenth century, however, necessitated rebuilding. Over the course of the fif-



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teenth century, the remains of Seville's Great Mosque were systematically destroyed to make way for a new Gothic cathedral, the plan of which followed the enormous footprint of the former mosque's prayer hall. Seville's new cathedral was a powerful emblem of the city's newly accumulated wealth, derived from commercial ventures in the Americas, and the cathedral's dominating presence in the city was a reminder of the religious and political status it enjoyed as arch-episcopate and the recipient of royal patronage. Seville's new cathedral was virtually completed by 1523, when the Bishop and Canons proposed their project for the Cordoba mosque-cathedral. The work at Seville was no doubt present in the mind of the Bishop of Cordoba and the Canons when they proposed to construct a new church.

The proposal was not well received in Cordoba, however, where there were no pressing structural reasons to replace the celebrated structure. Indeed, a Cordoban civic council intervened in the fledgling undertaking, ordering the project to a halt. The seriousness of the opposition to the destruction of the former Great Mosque was unequivocal; the Council threatened capital punishment to anyone who altered the structure of the former mosque in any way until the matter was resolved. In an attempt to preserve the existing structure, the Council appealed to Charles V to ensure the survival of their "singular and most celebrated antique building."<sup>3</sup> Without ever actually laying eyes on the building, Charles V sided with the Bishop and Canons' in favor of a new church, and a new main chapel (*capilla mayor*) was constructed within the existing structure. Unlike the additions which had characterized the previous generations of Christian intervention, the project endorsed



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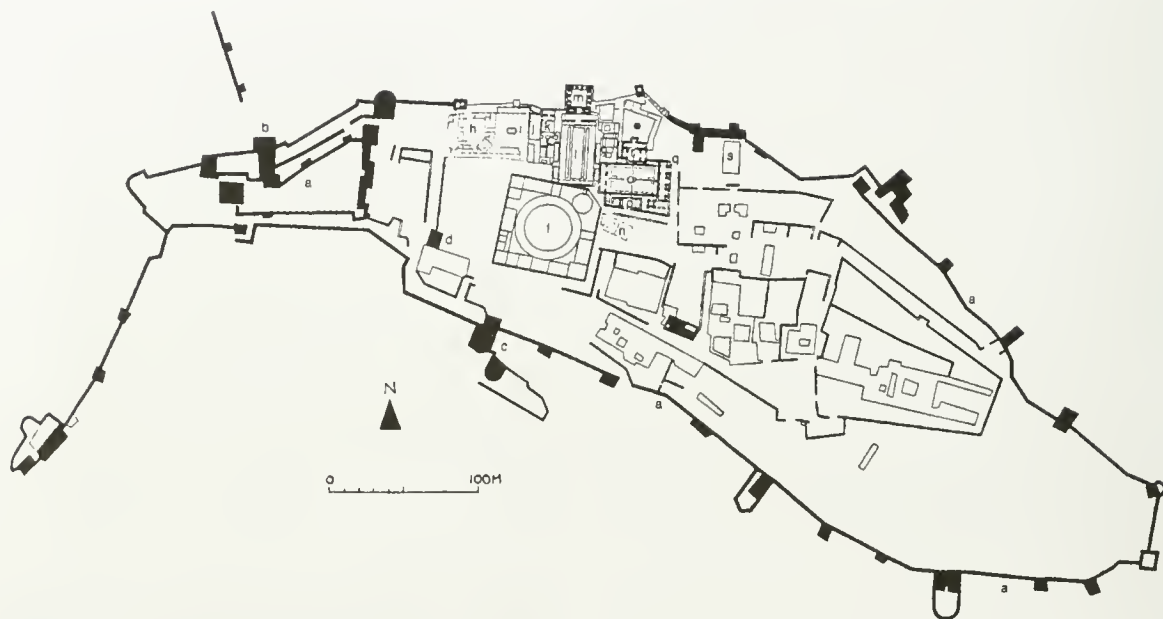
by Charles V was dramatic in its invasiveness; to all appearances an entire Gothic cathedral was inserted into the very heart of the former prayer hall. In order to accommodate the new *capilla mayor*, sections of the ninth- and tenth-century additions to the prayer hall were demolished, and the double arcades of the hypostyle interior were filled with panels of relief sculpture to define the chapel walls. In plan, the new chapel disrupts the illusion of the endless “forest of columns” which had formerly characterized the interior space, and the soaring elevation of the addition dramatically changed both the way the mosque was experienced as a ritual space and the way in which the total architectural composition was viewed from outside. When Charles V visited Cordoba in 1526 to assess the results of his support, his reaction was famously unenthusiastic. “If I had known your intentions,” he allegedly commented, “you would not have done this. You desired what could have been constructed anywhere, but here you had that which was unique in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

#### PROJECT TWO: THE TWO PALACES

Despite his denunciation of the addition to the Great Mosque of Cordoba accomplished under his authority, Charles almost immediately initiated another project at the Alhambra. Founded in the thirteenth century by the Nasrid dynasty, the last of the Islamic rulers on the Iberian

Peninsula, the Alhambra was a complete palatine city composed of a fortress, baths, mosques, industrial areas, and a number of gardens and palaces (Fig. 5). Whereas the Great Mosque of Cordoba ushered in the Peninsula’s Islamic era, the Alhambra witnessed its end. As the site from which the last Nasrid Sultan was exiled from the Iberian Peninsula by the Castilian monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, the Alhambra became the focus of great nostalgia for what was perceived as the vanished glory of the Peninsula’s Islamic past. The Alhambra has acquired layered meanings for those who appropriated it and those who visited it which are usually associated with the perceived glory of the Islamic past, or the significance of the Christian conquest of the Peninsula.

Ferdinand and Isabella, the rulers of the newly unified Peninsula and the grandparents of Charles V, appropriated the Alhambra as their administrative and residential center. They adopted Nasrid court practices and even stipulated that the Alhambra be preserved as a national monument.<sup>5</sup> Charles was also struck by the Alhambra, since he purportedly exclaimed upon seeing it, “Unhappy is he who lost all this!”<sup>6</sup> Charles visited Granada in 1526, the same year in which he viewed the new chapel in Cordoba and initiated a project to construct a new palace within the Nasrid citadel. However, escalating tensions with the Ottoman Empire,



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France, and the papacy forced him to plan the new project through correspondence with Spanish collaborators familiar with the Alhambra site.<sup>7</sup>

In 1527, while on the military campaign which ended in the disastrous Sack of Rome, Charles V received a preliminary proposal for the new palace—a freestanding, square, symmetrical structure with a round interior courtyard, first conceived as a small residential villa. Though this basic formula was maintained in the imposing structure eventually constructed, Charles insisted on the accommodation of administrative functions within the new building, thus changing its character from private royal residence to bureaucratic center and necessitating the destruction of parts of the Islamic complex.<sup>8</sup> The massive scale of Charles' new palace, the severe geometry of the circle-within-a-square plan, and the almost unadorned forms are rendered all the more vivid when juxtaposed with the intimate scale and ornamental richness of the Nasrid palaces located just steps away.

## INTERPRETING THE PROJECTS

Charles V's involvement with the new chapel at the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the new palace at the Alhambra signals a departure from previous Christian patronage at the two Islamic monuments. How are we to interpret this shift? The answer hinges on the relationship between Charles V and Spain, and the political tensions between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire which characterized his reign. Part of what distinguished Charles' reign as Holy Roman Emperor from those of his predecessors was the tangible wealth that he derived from his power base in Spain, the most powerful of the Western European countries at the time. Charles V dominates much of the history of sixteenth-century Western Europe. The material and military benefits derived from his Spanish crown and the political power he wielded as Archduke of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor place him as the key player of events associated with the increasingly powerful Ottoman Empire, the rise of Protestantism, the Sack of Rome, and the revolt within his Spanish kingdom. As Holy Roman Emperor, Charles was at the forefront of European attempts to stave

off the Ottoman Empire. The increasing power of the Ottomans was accompanied by a new tide of European hostility toward Islam, as the advance of Ottoman troops into Europe seemed to signal the impending conquest of western Christendom. The 1520s, when the projects at the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the Alhambra were initiated, were the most turbulent years of the sixteenth century; the additions to the two venerable Islamic monuments convey much of the tension Europeans felt about Islam, as well as the European ambivalence about the material remains of the Islamic past with which they were confronted on the Iberian Peninsula.

In 1527, the same year in which he began corresponding on the specifics of his new palace at the Alhambra, Charles' imperial troops sacked Rome. This event was stimulated in part by the complex political maneuverings of Charles himself, the Pope, and the kings of France and England.<sup>9</sup> Charles' army spared Florence from the looting which was considered a victorious army's due, but could not be stopped from pillaging the papal city. As Holy Roman Emperor, Charles' first duty was to defend Christianity. The attack on Rome by a Christian army, in light of the Ottoman threat, is indicative of the troubles that plagued Western Europe and its Church. The rise of Martin Luther also seemed to signal a crumbling from within at a time when Christian Europe needed a unified front to withstand the Ottoman forces. Accompanying the rising political tension, malicious stereotypes about Muslims that had originated in the Middle Ages proved astoundingly tenacious and were repeated in sixteenth-century literature. One such work, composed under the patronage of Charles V himself, used established stereotypes in descriptions of the Ottoman Turks as vicious rapists who preyed on innocents, virgins, married women, widows, and orphans, and who desecrated religious images.<sup>10</sup> Europeans worried that the Spanish Muslims might join the Turks or the Syrians in an attempt to overthrow Christian rule, creating a strained religious and cultural atmosphere in sixteenth-century Spain.

However, anti-Muslim sentiment constituted only one part of the socio-cultural context that underlies the changes made to the former Islamic sites in the sixteenth-century. Local competition also informed the creation of the additions: in the case of the Great Mosque, the desire of the local Bishop and Canons to vie with nearby wealthy Seville must have been a factor in the campaign for an updated church. Similarly, the architectural style embodied by the High Renaissance buildings—such as Donato Bramante's

centrally-planned Tempietto—associated with the papal court, must have provided strong motivations in the conception of the new palace at the Alhambra (Fig. 6). In addition, the palace needed to accommodate the extensive court associated with the office of Holy Roman Emperor.

Considering the religious and political context in which Charles V was embroiled, the dramatic additions to the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the Alhambra, with their insistence upon Gothic and Renaissance forms, are emphatic architectural statements about the desire of sixteenth-century Christian Europe to control the past and, by extension their stand against the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the sixteenth-century additions, when viewed in tandem with their Islamic contexts, also convey a deep ambivalence about the Islamic monuments on the part of the projects' patrons and the local communities who identified deeply with the monuments despite their Islamic history. In fact, the extent to which the Islamic origins of the monuments were present in the minds of the communities who used them is not clear. Surely, the importance of the monuments stemmed from the layers of meaning and memory acquired during their post-*reconquista* appropriation by new communities of users and patrons, more than any conception of the monuments' Islamic history.

I have already noted Charles V's celebrated preference for the Great Mosque of Cordoba before the insertion of the new *capilla mayor*. And, like many other Europeans who visited the Alhambra in the sixteenth century, Charles also clearly admired the Nasrid palaces. He was particularly attracted to the Court of the Lions and insisted that the new palace be sited in a way that would allow him immediate access to it from his private apartments, although the configuration he desired would have necessitated the destruction of the Alhambra Church (again, a former mosque) of Santa Maria del Alhambra.<sup>11</sup> The local Christian population strongly opposed the destruction of the mosque-turned-church: when Charles requested that the archbishop of Granada deconsecrate the site to allow for construction, the archbishop responded that such authority rested with the Pope alone, and further admonished Charles V with the examples of Constantine and Theodosius, Roman emperors who had given their palaces to the Church. Considering the recent Sack of Rome by Charles' army, the Pope was unwilling to deconsecrate the site. Charles finally accepted the impossibility of building the new palace immediately adjacent to the Court of the Lions and the project was able to proceed. Remarkably, Charles' willingness to destroy a



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church and to suffer the disapproval of the Christian community merely to gain greater proximity to the Court of the Lions resulted in a four-year delay in construction of his new palace.

The European valorization of Islamic material culture, including architecture, in the sixteenth century was of course not a new phenomenon, but the continuation of a long-established pattern. Beginning in the Middle Ages the Church put Islamic luxury goods, especially textiles and objects of rock crystal and precious metal to liturgical use. Saints' relics were often wrapped in Islamic textiles, even in fragments woven with passages from the Koran, and the use of pseudo-Kufic calligraphy in paintings of the Madonna and Child became common.<sup>13</sup> Such instances of Christian adaptation of Islamic material culture are sometimes simply dismissed as polemical statements of Christian conquest of Islam, but clearly such appropriations demonstrate, as the sixteenth-century additions to the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the Alhambra do, the ambivalence surrounding architecture, religion, politics, and identity that underlay the appropriation

of Islamic objects by sixteenth-century Christian Europeans. Despite the political tension between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, the reactions of Charles V and those who lived with and used the monuments indicate that to summarize the additions to the religious structures as the architectural embodiments of anti-Muslim polemic, as we might instinctively do, is too simplistic. At the very least, such an interpretation is but one part of a larger and more complex array of meanings which can be attached to the monuments following the later additions. The sixteenth-century changes may be best understood as a way in which Charles V and the Bishop and Canons of Cordoba preserved monuments which they valued despite any evocation of the Islamic past or Muslim culture which the buildings might have conveyed. The additions at the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the Alhambra also provided a way for the Christian rulers to distance themselves from and to disrupt the cultural continuity which these two most celebrated Islamic monuments of the Iberian Peninsula represented in the sixteenth century.



## NOTES

1 In rethinking the assumptions I made about this topic in my M.A. thesis, from which this article is drawn, I benefited from many conversations with several members of HTC at MIT. I would especially like to thank Howayda al-Harithy, David Friedman, Michele Lamprakos, and Kathy Wheeler-Borum for generously sharing their thoughts and advice.

2 Jernilynn D. Dodds, "The Great Mosque of Cordoba," in *al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Patronato de la Alhambra, 1992), 11-26; Nuha Khoury. "The meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the tenth century," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996): 80-98.

3 Luis María Ramírez y las Casas-Deza, *Corografía Historico-Estadística de la Provincia y Obispado de Córdoba*, Vol. 2, edited by Antonio Lopez Ontiveros (Cordoba: Publicaciones del Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros de Cordoba, 1986), 458. Dodds, "Great Mosque," 24-25.

4 Casas-Deza, 459.

5 Ibid., 458-59.

6 Jonathan Brown, "Spain in the Age of Exploration: Crossroads of Artistic Cultures," *Circa 1492*, edited by Jay A. Levenson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 41-49.

7 Karl Baedeker, *Spain and Portugal, Handbook for Travelers*, fourth edition (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1913), 349.

8 For a discussion of the figures involved in the complex building history of the palace, see Earl Rosenthal, *The Palace of Charles V in Granada* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 3-21. For an analysis of Machuca's paintings see Rosenthal, 223-235; for Luis Hurtado Mendoza's background and classical interests see Rosenthal, 7-10.

9 Ibid., 23-27.

10 Andre Chastel, *The Sack of Rome, 1527*, translated by Beth Archer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

11 John S. Geary. "Arredondo's Castillo inexpugnable de la fee: Anti-Islamic Propaganda in the Age of Charles V," *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, edited by John V. Tolan (NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 291-312.

12 Ibid., 35-42.

13 Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Architecture and the West—Influences and Parallels," *Islam and the Medieval West*, edited by Stanley Ferber (New York: University Art Galleries, 1975). Also see Vladimir P. Goss, "Western Architecture and the World of Islam," *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, edited by Vladimir P. Goss (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1986), 361-376.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Court of the Lions, Alhambra

Fig. 2: Great Mosque of Cordoba, plan showing the vaulting and tracery with the sixteenth-century addition at the center.

Fig. 3: *Capilla Mayor* in the Great Mosque, dome.

Fig. 4: Great Mosque Prayer Hall, Cordoba.

Fig. 5: Alhambra complex. Palace of Charles V (circle-within-square plan) in the center with the Court of the Myrtles and the Court of the Lions in the north and northeast corner.

Fig. 6: Palace of Charles V, Granada.

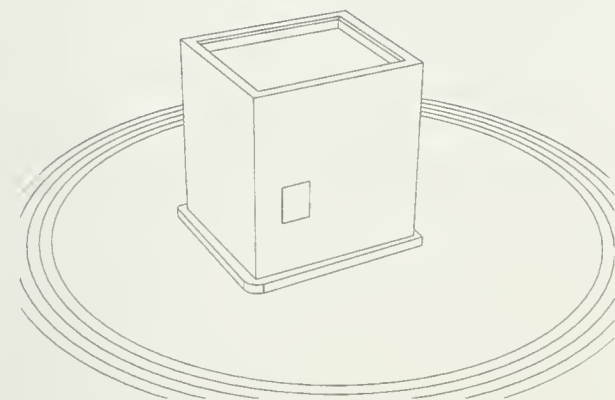
NASSER RABBAT

## IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE HOUSE: ON THE IMAGE OF THE TWO NOBLE SANCTUARIES OF ISLAM

Architecture is an expansive concept with multifarious definitions. It is primarily the envelope of human activities and beliefs expressed diversely depending on time, culture, environment, setting, and technical capability. But it is also that branch of human creativity that is relied upon to frame, embody, and preserve memories. Despite Victor Hugo's melancholy proclamation, *ceçi tuera cela*, suggesting that printing will eliminate architecture as the carrier of memory, the interdependence between architecture and memory has never waned. Nor does it show any sign of weakening in the more than a quarter century since the introduction of computers, followed by telecommunication, digitization, and the web. In fact, recent developments in the study of memory have focused on architecture as a fertile field of investigation into the mechanisms by which individuals as well as groups create, store, retrieve, and manipulate their memories. Not surprisingly, the connection between architecture and memory has not been more effective than in two of the most primordial and intimate of architectural spaces: the house and the temple. And, nowhere has the memorial reciprocity between house and temple been more pronounced than in the two foundational Islamic religious centers, the Ka'ba in Mecca and the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina.

Most of us recognize the house as our first encounter with architecture. We experience it with our senses and our feelings: spatially, visually, viscerally, verbally, emotionally, and imaginatively. It is our abode, shelter, place of residence, and often our place of birth or death. It is the center of our personal and familial activities and the shield of our privacy and intimacy. We live within its walls, under its roof, protected from inclement weather, harsh sunlight, intrusive gaze, and unwelcome transgressions from the outside.

Most societies have developed a mental image of the house that epitomizes its essential qualities and is passed on to all their members. We all have seen how children of a certain culture, particular climate, or social milieu tend to draw the house in a similar fashion, often as a cube or a rectangle—the perfect shape of shelter—pierced by windows and doors, and sometimes topped with some kind of roof (usually a gabled roof in the northern climes). But this is a general representation of the house, any house, as the collective memory of society has imagined it. It is not yet “my house.” For a house to be my house, it has to be architecturally and perceptually personalized. It has to encompass the realm of my private and intimate life. It has to be the repository of my memories and those that I share with my family, friends, and relatives. It also has to be the reminder of my most significant moments, my successes and failures, my bygone years, and my departed loved ones. All of these feelings have to be inscribed in my house's forms and spaces, its nooks and crannies, its details and furniture, and have to remain there decipherable only to me and to those close to me. My house also has to evoke the same sensations that I once experienced while inhabiting it, even though the events and environments in which I first encountered these sensations may have disappeared. Furthermore, I should be able to recall these memories even when I see my house in my mind's eye, speak about it to others who do not know it, or come back to it after many years of absence. This is precisely the unfettered abundance of meaning that architecture possesses and manipulates. In addition to the collective memory that begets and defines it, architecture has the capacity to absorb and convey private meanings, meanings that reflect and identify its designers, owners, viewers, or users.



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Architectural types vary in their ability to accommodate memories. Some are believed to be more capacious than others, but there is a commonly accepted correlation between the monumental and the memorial. Large, lofty, and complex buildings tend to command an excess of meaning that cannot be filled with their direct and intentional functions and intents. The memorial surplus is usually consumed by symbolic, ideological, emotional, intellectual, or private references. Most celebrated national and religious monuments take advantage of this established correspondence between grandeur and remembrance to construct their messages. But this is only one type of signification in memorial architecture—and the most obvious and direct one at that. A more mature architecture does not depend for its meanings on elaborate designs, large spaces, precious materials, or extensively circumscribed signs and relics. This artful architecture evokes the memories attached to it but does not fix them. It consciously manifests ample possibilities of nonspecific functions and meanings in its forms and spaces so that the individual can make it his or her own architecture, the milieu of his or her own memories, while it retains its initial role as the repository of collective meanings and memories.

The Ka'ba in Mecca displays these attributes as well as some more potent ones for it serves as the Omphalos of the Earth according to Islamic cosmology (Fig. 1). It is an ancient cubical stone building with no definitive origin. The Koran (3:96) calls it the first "House of God" (*Bayt Allah*)

on Earth. According to different legends, it was based on a heavenly model and created prior to the Earth itself, the angels built it on divine order, or Adam, the first man, built it. After the Deluge, it was rebuilt by Abraham and his son, Ishmael, as a house of worship for the one God but was later contaminated by polytheistic practices. The Ka'ba thus carried primal mystical significance and primeval memories that were reclaimed by Muhammad during his prophetic mission, and which culminated in his triumphant re-entry into Mecca, cleansing the Ka'ba of all signs of polytheism. The centrality of the Ka'ba was ensconced in the nascent Islamic faith through its declaration as the *qibla* (liturgical orientation) towards which all Muslims should pray and the institution of the *hajj* to Mecca—the ritual circumambulation of the Ka'ba seven times—as one of the five fundamental Pillars of Islam. Scholarly treatises and folkloric narratives later elaborated on these initial functions which endowed every detail of the Ka'ba and its surroundings with a host of cultic meanings and religio-historic importance.

But the Ka'ba, by virtue of its simple, hollow, and unadorned form—which seems to have changed little despite its having been built five times in the first Islamic century—is also at once the most ideal space for the embodiment of abstract concepts and the best receptacle of individual memories. Despite its immutability as the axiomatic symbol of Islamic cosmogony, the Ka'ba is the perfect crystallization of the most elementary notion of the house (*bayt*) as imagined by most people: the cube, the most earthly of the basic geometric forms as opposed to the sphere, the most celestial of them. The Ka'ba (which is phonetically suggestive of the English word "cube" although they belong to different families of languages) is thus akin to the original house. It carries in its cubicalness the most fundamental recollections of home as they have been imbedded in the depth of human collective memory since people began to settle down, build houses, and live together in kinship-based communities.

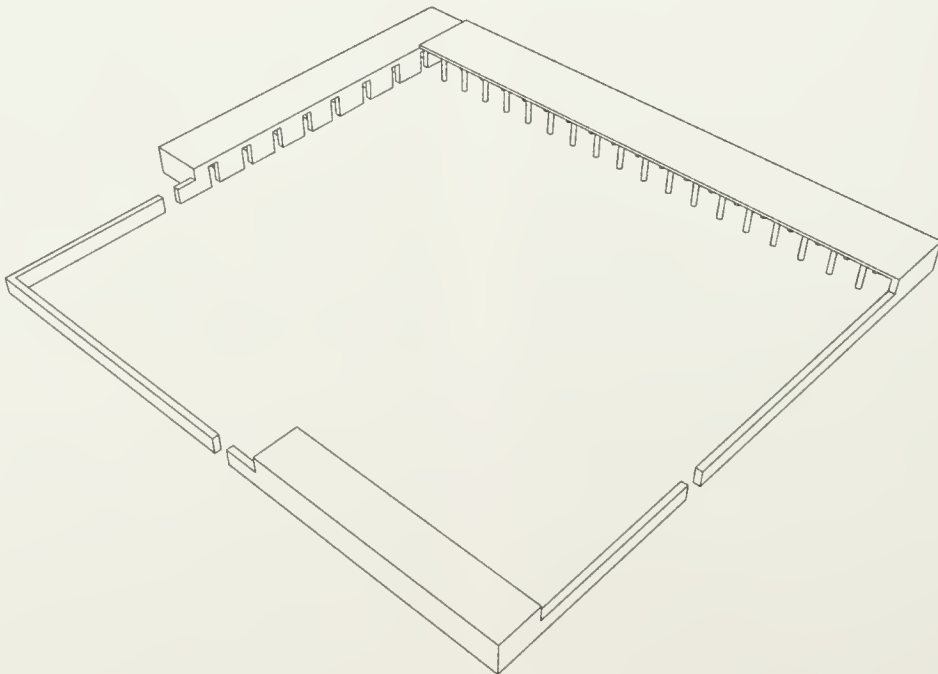
Whence comes the symbolic, supra-religious omnipotence of the Ka'ba. With its familiar and supremely memorial form, containing within its neat contour universal signs related to the upbringing of the individual in a protective shelter with a loving family, the Ka'ba invites its visitor to indulge memories of his/her own house. It ingratiates itself to the visitor as a private, warm, and familiar space although it never loses either its essential significance as the congregational center of the Islamic nation or the focus of its transcendental connection with heaven. This is the

reason for the Ka'ba's success as a memorial structure. It is both the original House of God, which is the locus of human veneration as postulated by Islamic theology, and the ultimate reminder of both the ubiquitous and particular house imagined by most people. It is the unique proof of a link to the heavenly realm and an intimate human meta-form. It represents Islamic collective memory in its most inclusive and universal form, and it serves as the referent to the private, individualized, and fuzzy memory of one's own home. Perhaps this is why the Ka'ba has rarely been copied in Islamic architectural history; its recent imitators—notably in Dacca, Bangladesh—have failed to endow their model with the same kind of significance which the original so effortlessly imparts to its visitors. Its inimitability lies in the unique memory it embodies.

The Mosque of the Prophet in Medina is diametrically opposed in conception to the Ka'ba. The Mosque of the Prophet is physically and liturgically attached to his house and was similarly venerated by Muslims since the beginning of Islam (Fig. 2). However, it was meant to be mundane, social, and public and to mark the establishment of the Islamic polity under the authority of its leader Muhammad

and its constitution, the Koran. A simple open and rectangular court bordered on the north and south by rudimentary hypostyle halls, the Mosque accommodated several functions. It was the House of the Nation (*Bayt al-Umma*), a site of worship, an agora, a courthouse, a learning center, and a refuge for the poor, homeless, and destitute. But what lent the Mosque its fundamental and unique significance and ensured its lasting remembrance was first and foremost its contiguity to the House of the Prophet (*Bayt al-Rasul*)—a measly row of shacks on one side of the Mosque, each housing one wife. The adjacency of the house imbued the Mosque with the personal and intimate aspects of the Prophet's life, constituting the ideal life depicted in *sunna* (traditions of the Prophet) compilations and considered by every pious Muslim as the moral and behavioral example to follow.

The Mosque of the Prophet was fast duplicated and reproduced during the first Islamic century in numerous congregational mosques in Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, North Africa, Spain, and Iran. Copies of the prophetic archetype, however, were not based solely on ideal and memorial values; they were also consequences of





the Mosque of the Prophet's near-perfect assimilation of the religious, political, and social needs of the first Islamic communities. The early mosques were all effectively used as the centers of Islamic life in both newly founded and conquered cities.

In time, the House of the Prophet was absorbed into the continuously expanding mosque to accommodate the increasing flow of visitors. In one of the rooms of the House of the Prophet, Muhammad and his close companions and immediate successors Abu Bakr and Omar were entombed. The entire complex became secondary only to the Ka'ba as a site of visitation during the *hajj*. Subsequently, the memorial, symbolic, and functional properties of the original structure became assimilated with the collective consciousness of the growing Islamic nation, pointing to the memory of the founder of Islam and the organization of his divinely inspired and well-guided community. The copies of the Mosque of the Prophet had to subsume these transformations although, unlike their archetype, they contained no prophetic relics or spatial memories of the Prophet. Instead, they became the architectural signs of the nation's yearning to recapture the Golden Age of the Prophet and to reenact his communal model. Even the liturgical elements that became essential features of every mosque by the end of the first Islamic century—the minaret, *mihrab*, and *minbar*—had their origins in some initial prototype from the Prophet's Mosque. The institutionalization of the elements reinforced the dual functions of all mosques, regardless of exact architectural form: to remember so as to emulate the prophetic exemplar. They further articulated the memorial function through the specific meanings that they came to carry as landmarks, as sites of ritual services, and as reminders of the first instances of their use during the lifetime of the departed and beloved founder, the Prophet Muhammad.

The Ka'ba and the Mosque of the Prophet were the sites of epochal events in early Islamic history, thus endowing the buildings with powerful meanings which became deeply rooted in Islamic collective memory. In addition, the two houses were the foundational *loci* upon which much of

what became integral to Islam and Islamic world views had its first test run before being incorporated either in the commemorative rituals of the *hajj* or the day-to-day practices of Muslims. The two structures struck a delicate balance between the monumental environments of collective memories and the warm, intimate spaces of personal associations and remembrance. What is more, they accomplished this task primarily through their intelligently referenced architecture. By formally and symbolically alluding to prototypical houses, the two structures enabled the individual to form personal connections to them (complete with private images and fantasies) without losing an iota of their religious and cosmological hold on the Islamic collective consciousness. The Ka'ba and the Mosque of the Prophet enriched their attendant abstract and enigmatic meanings by imbuing them with the universal and serene connotations of the house; as a result, they succeeded in bringing hallowed concepts down to the level of the lived and the tangibility of everyday life.

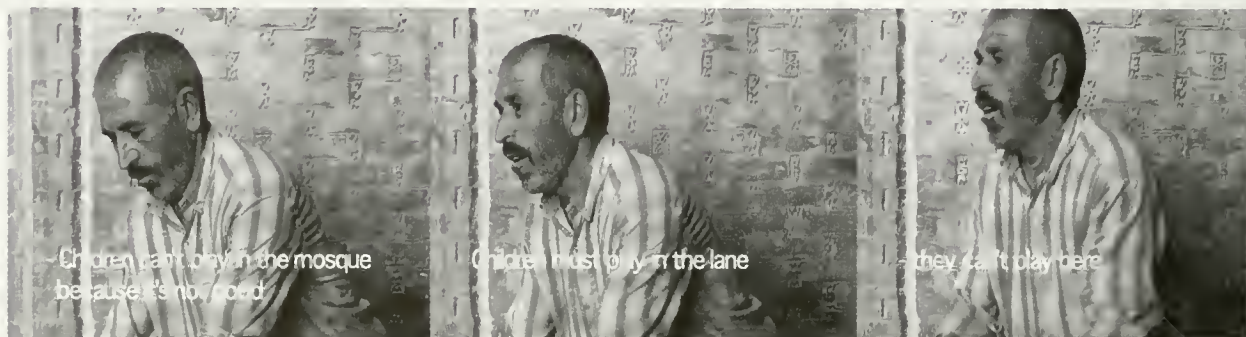
No doubt, this is why these two primordial houses have become the subjects of intense acts of private devotion and commemoration. Countless Muslims communicate with the buildings in highly personal ways. They imagine them as familiar forms, dream about visiting them, experience a certain pious rapture when they see them, remember them passionately after their visit, and try to recapture their impressions of them lyrically and pictorially. By means of these sensory or pictorial experiences, the Ka'ba and the Mosque of the Prophet have transcended their communal and cosmological meanings to penetrate the inner circles of the individual's mental space, lodged there as private and privately cherished memories. This, in my opinion, is the noblest achievement to which architecture can aspire.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: The Ka'ba, Mecca.

Fig. 2: The Mosque of the Prophet, Medina.

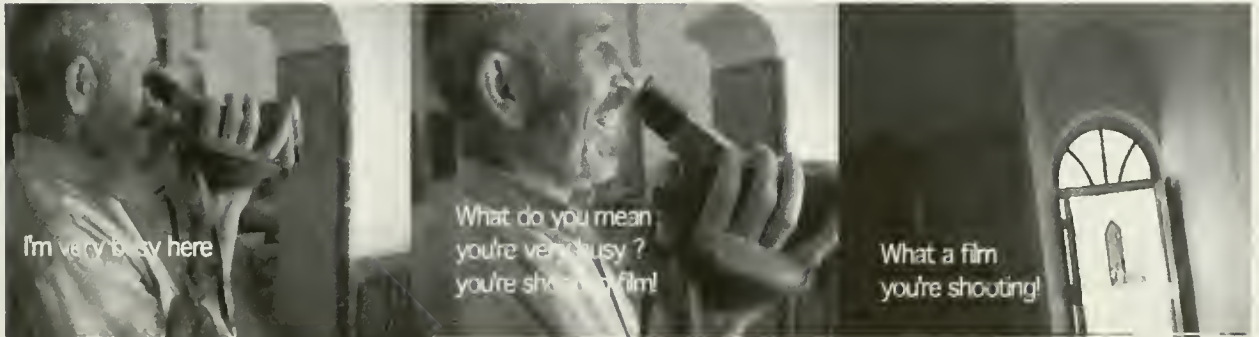
ÇAGLA HADIMIOGLU  
BETWEEN PRAYERS:  
PROSCRIBED SCENES FROM A HISTORIC MONUMENT



The twenty minutes of edited video footage from the fourteenth-century congregational Mosque of Yazd in Iran engages Henri Lefebvre's definition of a monument as:

determined by what may take place there and consequently by what may not take place there, (prescribed/ proscribed, scene/obscene).<sup>1</sup>

Proscribed activities do take place at the Mosque, but they are transgressive. I chose to shoot and edit the communal, non-ritual activities of the Mosque—the activities which occur “between prayers”—and I privileged moments of authority and transgression, work and play. The caretakers, the regulators of the space, constitute almost archetypal figures of authority controlling what is allowed, and what is not, while children and young men are figures of transgression, animating the Mosque with proscribed activities.



Neither the figures of authority within the Mosque nor those of transgression are stable. The camera participates in shifting the activities of the individual from prescribed to proscribed or *vice versa*. For example, I had requested that the caretaker, Ali Yarmir, use the camera to record his favorite places in the Mosque; he unexpectedly turned the lens on his friend in imitation of my own interviews. Ali, operating a small Hi-8 video camera, is ridiculed for his "play:" "You're very busy?" taunts his friend, "You're shooting film!"

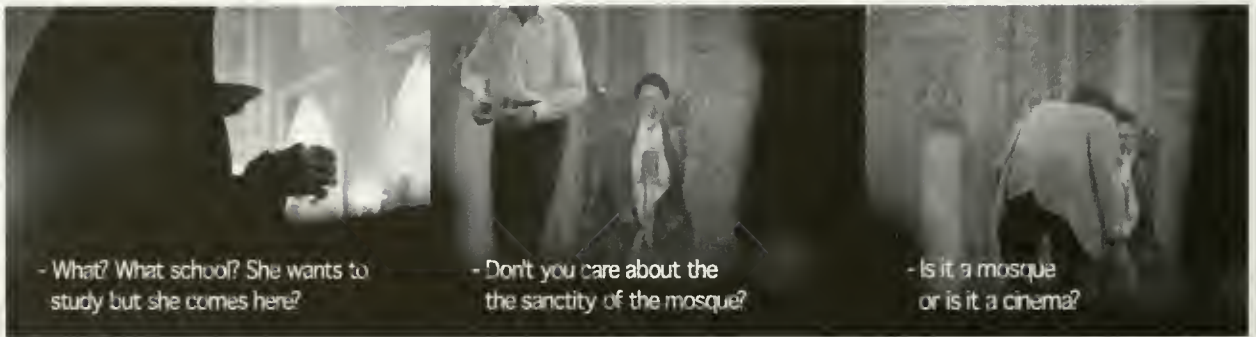


The children, although proscribed from playing in the Mosque—"they have to play in the lane"—play carefree in several spaces of the Mosque including the *mihrab* (two girls run between their praying mothers). "Capturing" such behavior prescribes it—the children are validated by the camera; the camera also discourages the caretakers from admonishment. Focusing study on the "obscene," by definition, renders it a "scene."





In recording the prescribed and proscribed functions of the monument, the edited video also highlights what is generally proscribed from our archival practices. Instead of constructing a “scene” that focuses on the monument as a built artifact, the video presents the lived occupation of the Mosque—what would conventionally be relegated to outside the camera’s frame or edited out of the final product. As such, the figures of authority, the caretakers, and the figures of transgression, the children, stand in for the unstable identity of the scholar herself.

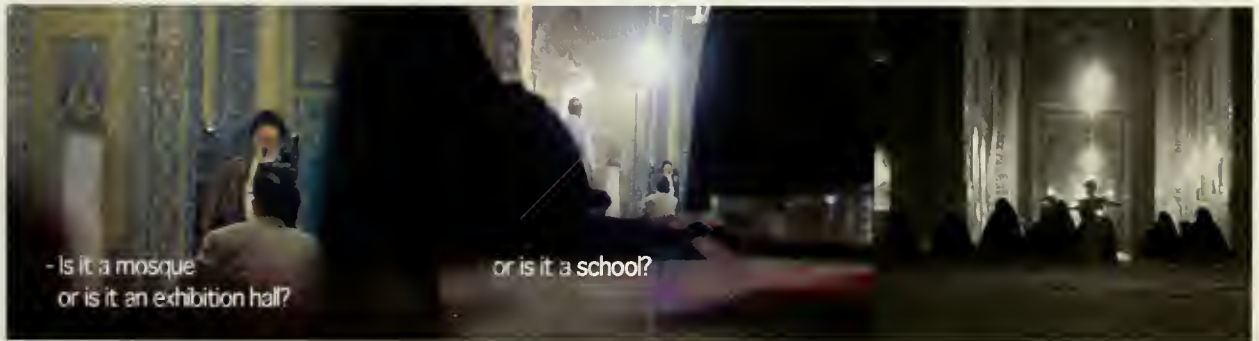


- What? What school? She wants to study but she comes here?

- Don't you care about the sanctity of the mosque?

- Is it a mosque or is it a cinema?

Although I ostensibly present the edited footage in an academic context, as a “document” of study, the highlighted instability of authority and transgression implies the instability of the status of my own work. The incorporation into the video of footage shot by the Mosque’s regular inhabitants problematizes my “play” as an outsider. Yet, the disparate quality of our images and the respective size of our cameras provide evidence of my own apparent “authority” in relation to these local “authorities” and to the work. Within the video, my work is explicitly thrown into the discourse of the prescribed and proscribed activities of the Mosque. This is apparent in an overheard discussion between a few local young men and the head caretaker, Haji Abbas:



Mohammad Reza: She's here to take pictures for her study, is there anything wrong with that?"

Haji Abbas: "Yes there's something wrong with that!"

Ali Reza: "What? What's wrong?"

Haji Abbas: "Don't you care about the sanctity of the mosque? Is it a mosque or is it a cinema?"  
Is it a mosque or is it an exhibition hall? Is it a mosque...or is it a school?"

The moving image as a form of knowledge production is typically marginalized within the "discourses of sobriety" which they serve; this experiment, situated within the domain of architectural history and theory, constitutes a similarly transgressive "play."<sup>2</sup> The "sanctity of the mosque" to which Haji Abbas refers might stand in for the "sanctity" of scholarship that dictates propriety in representational practice, admitting certain mediums and excluding others.



Another passage from Lefebvre structures the edited footage as well:

Architecture produces living bodies, each with its own distinctive traits. The animating principle of such a body, its presence, is neither visible nor legible as such, nor is it the object of any discourse, for it reproduces itself within those who use the space in question, within their lived experience. Of that experience, the tourist, the passive spectator, can grasp but a pale shadow.

The final sentence, "Of that experience the tourist, the passive spectator, can grasp but a pale shadow," concludes the work. Although the scholar, clearly an outsider, is conflated with the tourist, she is incorporated within the video and actively participates in grasping shadows (digital encodings). The edited video offers both a critique of how we conventionally think about architecture and represent it, effacing the practices of the occupants, and offers an alternative, albeit imperfect, and one of many possibilities.





CARETAKERS  
 Ali Yarmir and Haji Abbas

ALSO FEATURING  
 The congregation at the Mosque of Yazd

CAMERA  
 Mohammad Reza Alvansaz  
 Ç. Hadimioglu  
 Ali Yarmir  
 Hassan Yazdi

EDITING  
 Ç. Hadimioglu

TRANSLATIONS AND INTERVIEWS IN YAZD  
 Mehdi Saeed Shirazi  
 Mozaffer Davudi

TRANSLATION IN BOSTON  
 Mehdi Yahyanejad

## NOTES

- 1 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), 224
- 2 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 23. Nichols coins the phrase "discourse of sobriety."



# SAMER AKKACH RELIGIOUS MAPPING AND THE SPATIALITY OF DIFFERENCE

It is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction's charm. For it is the difference which forms the poetry of the map and the charm of the territory, the magic of the concept and the charm of the real.

—Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 1983, 3.

Driving from Boston to Montreal and Ottawa for the first time, I was taken by the "charm of the territory." Yet, I was also agitated by the tension between the map and the territory. The map helped me make sense of the new territory, and ultimately find my way, whereas the territory kept resisting the mapping conventions and challenging my readings, constantly revealing itself in surprisingly different ways. Losing the way became part of the experience that was taxing in as much as it was charming. On the stretches of highway, I wondered what it would have been like to travel without a map. Or with a map of inverted orientation, as the medieval Islamic maps (Fig. 1), or with one of Heinrich Bünting's sixteenth-century maps depicting the territory in the form of a winged stallion or a crowned woman (Figs. 2 & 3).

Through the mediation of sophisticated satellite and computer technologies, we now assume a certain real and objective relationship between the map and the territory and we see the stable geography of the earth as preceding the map. The map has simply become an abstraction of this non-negotiable reality, a mere tool with which to comprehend the land and find the way. In order to ensure universal comprehension of the map, the conventions of mapping are made consistent and transparent. Thus, a uniform sense of spatiality anchored in the Cartesian conception of reality

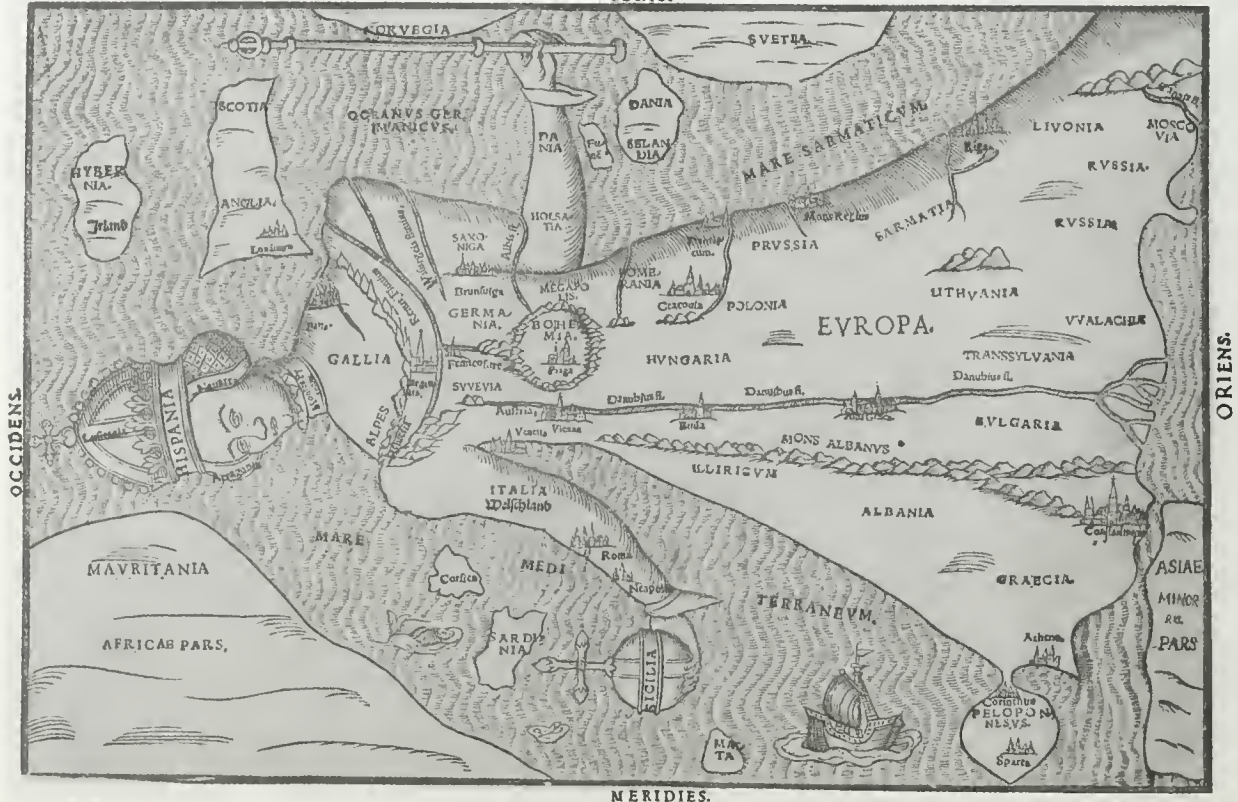
has been engendered by modern cartography. This sense of spatiality—an integral part of modernity—was alien to many pre-modern societies wherein geography was subordinated to theology, and wherein the map preceded the territory (Fig. 4). Access to God's all-encompassing vision of the territory, attained today through aerial surveys and satellite-projected images, was achieved primarily through religious texts. Visions, depictions, and spatial experiences of the territory were, therefore, conditioned by religious conceptions, which enabled multiple forms of imaginative mapping of the world. Today, we are compelled to define such mapping as "imaginative" because we have another form of mapping which we consider to be "real." Yet, these imaginative projections were just as real for pre-modern communities as the more technically sophisticated projections today.

The travelogues of the Damascene scholar 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, (d. 1741 AD) for example, show how imaginative mapping operates. In the travelogue of his journey to Jerusalem, al-Nabulusi frames the recording of his memoirs with an imaginative mapping of the geography of Jerusalem and the surrounding landscapes, referencing the geography of Mecca and other towns in the Hijaz region.<sup>1</sup> Al-Nabulusi had not been to the Hijaz when he projected this geographic correspondence; he had neither seen nor experienced the places and the landscapes to which he referred. His major journey to Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz took place four years after the journey to Palestine. Religious narratives enabled al-Nabulusi to conceptualize and visualize continuities and parallels between these two sacred geographies, and to make a unique sense of both the geography of Jerusalem he was experiencing and that of Hijaz, which was not immediately available to him.



# EVROPA PRIMA PARS TERRÆ IN FORMA VIRGINIS

SEPTENTRIO.



MERIDIES.

2

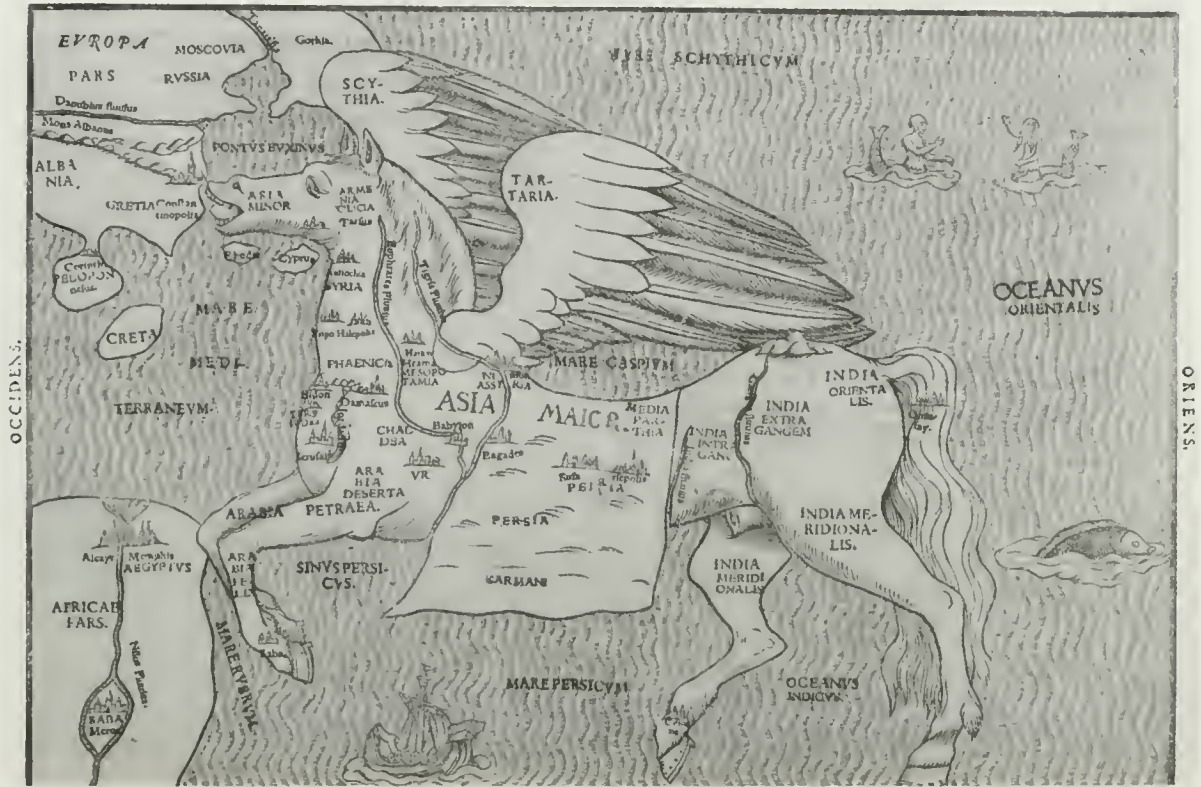
Al-Nabulusi reports a story, related by one of the Jerusalem locals, of a Christian master builder who converted to Islam after a Muslim saint appeared to him in a dream. To venerate the saint, the master builder decided to construct a domed tomb on his grave. At the very moment of completion, when the master builder climbed up the dome to install the crescent, the surrounding geography suddenly transformed. From the top of the dome in the neighborhood of Ginin in Palestine, Mecca and Medina suddenly became visible; the master builder could decipher the vision only with the help of the son of the saint himself.<sup>2</sup>

Our modern sense of spatiality makes it difficult for us to comprehend such projections. How is it possible for the thousands of miles that distance Ginin from Mecca and Medina to collapse? The answer lies in both the different notion of mapping and the different sense of spatiality the

pre-modern Muslim had, which derives from subordinating geography to theology and from regarding the map as preceding the territory. Mapping was not just a representational act but a creative one.

By "mapping," I do not mean the scientific enterprise of geographers and cartographers—although this is included—but making sense of geography through various conceptual or graphical means.<sup>3</sup> To *map* is to take the measure of the world, and taking measure involves, on the one hand, selection, translation, and differentiation, and on the other, visualizing, conceptualizing, recording, and representing. Whether conceptually or graphically projected, mapping configures space, translating it into a familiar and recognizable place wherein geographic locations are meaningfully related. Thus, mapping is not confined to the archived and the drawn; it can be spiritual, political, cultural, or moral,





and it can include, as many examples show, the remembered, the imagined, the anticipated, and the desired. Accordingly, mapping plays a central role in configuring our sense of spatiality, that is, our ways of understanding and making sense of the landscape, both in its natural and constructed form. Today, "cultural mappings play a central role in establishing the territories we inhabit and experience as real," as religious mappings in pre-modern societies.<sup>4</sup> Each religion constructed its own spatiality of difference which unfolded a range of creative and interpretive possibilities.<sup>5</sup>

To understand what the *spatiality of difference* entails in different religious contexts, one needs to examine the notions that are associated with the creative, rather than the imitative, projection of geography. In other words, it is not the working of cartographic production that is most revealing here, but rather the mode of thinking. To under-

stand al-Nabulusi's narrative, for instance, we need to turn our attention to the religious concepts that are associated with the significance of, and relationship between, places and landscapes. The Arab-Islamic concept of *fada'il* is perhaps the most pertinent.<sup>6</sup> *Fada'il* literally means "virtues" and "merits;" it is a plural form of *fadila*, meaning "moral excellence," and it derives from the triliteral *f.d.l.*, meaning "to be in excess," "to excel," and "to be superior." It is used mainly as an adjective in panegyric literature to denote the virtues and merits of certain texts, individuals, cities, monuments, or times. The concept of *fada'il* pre-dates Islam, but, in the early stages of the religion, the *fada'il* texts compiled sayings attributed to the Prophet and his immediate companions. Later, they developed into a recognizable style of historiography infused with Islamic mythology and popular legends. The *fada'il* discourse derives primarily from being, as it were, a by-product of, and a direct

جاء



extension of, the science of prophetic traditions (*'ilm al-hadith*).

The religious concept of *fada'il* might seem remote to mapping, however, it is pertinent to both the constructed and the natural environment. *Fada'il* texts mark certain sites and cities, conferring religious significance upon them and establishing hierarchical relationships between them. The instrumentality of mapping is inscribed in the concept of *fada'il* through its tactics of delineating virtuous places, of structuring them hierarchically, and of imbuing them with spiritual, cosmological, and eschatological significance. Through the textual delineation, a conceptual map is drawn. However, to see the agency of the *fada'il* at work as a form of religious mapping, one need not look in the *fada'il* texts themselves, for they only act, so to speak, as a "structuring grid." Rather, other chronicles, literature, and particularly, travelogues, and accounts of visitation (*ziyarat*) demonstrate the *fada'il* as a mapping guide. Occasionally, these texts present narratives which reveal the conceptual grid and the mapping agency of the *fada'il* through the "contours" of peculiar spatial practices and experiences. Both the correspondence al-Nabulusi visualizes between the Hijaz region and Jerusalem and the extraordinary visual experience of the master builder derive from the sacred virtues the two regions mark on the map of holiness. What lies in between is less significant and can be removed by religious desires.

The concept of *fada'il* is predicated on divine authority and mediated through literature. In this way, the concept of *fada'il* bears some similarity to the concept of "geopietry" found in other traditions. However, its modes of *realizing* and *mapping* a spatiality of difference are uniquely Islamic.<sup>7</sup> Despite their often-considerable length, the *fada'il* texts lack the compositional coherence of a narrative and the cogency of an argument. They are made up of fragmented, yet authoritative statements around which are woven a web of conceptions, mythical stories, and historical accounts. The *fada'il* authors, many of whom were *hadith* scholars (i.e., scholars concerned with the authentication and accurate reporting of the prophet's sayings) constructed their arguments through authentication rather than interpretation or measuring them up against the reality they represent. The authors of the *fada'il* rarely ask: what does the reported statement (or *hadith*) say? Or, is what is said valid? They instead ask: on whose authority does the authenticity of the statement hinge? What are the reported variations? And where does the text fit in the overall economy of *hadith*

scholarship? The context of these representational tracts, recedes behind the concern for its legitimacy and authenticity. The text itself appears transparent; it does not pose questions concerning agency, representation, and reality. What the text says is conflated with what it represents: the text becomes the reality. The *fada'il* discourse can thus be seen as a literary creation of reality; it *realizes* what it represents, it *realizes* difference; it makes difference real geographically; it creates a spatiality of difference.

In this sense, the concept of *fada'il* promotes a discriminatory view of geography based on God's own "preference" (*tafdil*, a derivative of *fada'il*). Things do not just happen serendipitously, but manifest in accordance with divine partiality, the logic of which hinges on the necessity of difference. In the overall scheme of creation, according not only to Islam but also to many other religions, different people, texts and places are not of equal status. In the beginning was *difference*. And difference was never meant to be projected democratically. Difference was predicated on a preference—an absolute, non-negotiable divine preference. From this perspective, the *fada'il* concept can be seen as an attempt to layout the matrix of differentiation spatially and to reveal the pattern of divine preference. It is a literary act to inscribe the ontological foundation of difference. Yet, difference is a relational concept that requires a horizon of reference against which the other can be differentiated. Naturally, the *fada'il* projects Islam as that horizon of reference to explain and identify divine preferences. The non-Muslim other occupies an awkwardly marginal position that is never in accordance with the order of things. The other is de-placed and de-spatialized. The *fada'il* texts on Jerusalem, for example, relate an elaborate story of how the Christians' attempts to construct a monumental building over the sacred rock—where the Dome of Rock was later built—long before the Islamic takeover, repeatedly failed. Their exquisite and highly adorned structure miraculously collapsed three times, forcing the Christians to consider a different site. It was not their architectural or engineering inadequacies that led to the repeated collapse, but simply their religious otherness. According to Islamic tradition, the site was originally designated for Muslims, and could only tolerate an architectural possibility in concordance with, as it were, the legitimate "cartographer," Islam. In this manner, the *fada'il* discourse relies on a politicized difference. Difference is politicized through religious scenarios of encounters with the sacred, which *take place* in the blurred spatiality of the real and the imaginary, the earthly and the heavenly. It is a determinedly Islamic version of geo-politics



wherein God, along with the Muslims, acts as a central figure in the plotting, unfolding, and staging of events. Through such geo-mythical conceptions, the *fada'il* enables, on the one hand, a unique religious mapping of the world, and on the other, the articulation of a spatial sensibility that blurs the boundary between the mythical and the real. It is through both the mapping act and the blurring of spatiality that the *fada'il* confers significance on places, buildings, and landscapes, thereby constructing its spatiality of difference (Fig. 4).

There are significant differences between conventional mapping and that of the *fada'il*. As a representational act, conventional mapping generates a duality: the real and the image. This involves an implicit tension: which comes first the geography or the map? When the territory is seen to precede the map, geographic reality becomes objectively stable, as is the case today. But when the "map" is seen to precede the territory, then geographic reality is never objectively stable, never "something external and 'given' for our apprehension."<sup>8</sup> As a mode of seeing, the mapping of *fada'il* precedes the territory; in fact, it creates the territory. Whereas the *geography* of conventional mapping is, by definition, mimetic, with the drawn map signifying spatial stability, the geography of the *fada'il* is projective and creative. It is a "tracing" of potentiality rather than fixed reality, a potentiality that unfolds in a multitude of forms with different encounters, engagements, and participations. As documented in numerous texts, this potentiality seems to actively engage the imagination of pre-modern Muslims, broadening their scope beyond the confines of the actual. Since the text is conflated with reality, the *fada'il* does not differentiate between reality and representation, but between what is *on* and *off* the map; what is virtuous and, therefore, *different*, and what is not.

Maps were originally conceived as a means of finding and founding the world.<sup>9</sup> Until modern technologies facilitated the projection of stable, non-negotiable images of the earth, mapping was largely an individually creative act (Fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> Pre-modern Muslim geographers, for instance, were able to creatively project their own "images" of the world. In pre-modern Islam, neither the term "map" nor the act of "mapping," existed in the modern sense. The terms *sura*, *rasm*, *naqsh*, which are used in pre-modern Arabic literature, denote the ideas of "form," "image," "drawing," and "painting" and are not exclusive to the field of geography and cartography. The modern term *kharita*, used both in Turkish and in Arabic, came from Catalan *carta* through the Greek

*kharti*.<sup>11</sup> It bears no relevance to pre-modern Islamic geographic conceptions or spatial practices.

It is interesting to note that until the later Ottoman period, Muslims do not seem to have mapped their holy places. Medieval mapping of Jerusalem, for example, was a purely Christian genre.<sup>12</sup> Neither Jews nor Muslims were known to have mapped the city, despite its significance in both traditions and their conspicuous preoccupation with its geography, architecture, and the urban landscape. Until the Crusade at the end of the eleventh century, only one map of Jerusalem is known to have existed, the Byzantine Madaba map of the sixth century. After the Crusaders' conquest, about twenty maps are known to have existed until the end of the fifteenth century, when the new printing technology had facilitated the production of maps.<sup>13</sup> From the sixteenth century onwards, Ottoman images of cities and urban centers began to emerge, mostly in the form of pictorial representations. This ambivalence towards the graphic representation of territory tends to give primacy to the verbal-literary depictions of the *fada'il* and the imaginative constructions it engenders. As late as the eighteenth century, as al-Nabulusi's texts clearly indicate, the concept of the *fada'il* was widely operative. The fluidity of its verbal-literary expressions had continued to activate the imaginative mappings and to evoke the poetic visualizations of geographies and landscapes up to the colonial encounters.

To conclude with a poetic example of religious mapping and the spatiality of difference in pre-modern Islam, I shall draw again on al-Nabulusi's travel memoirs. Describing the relationship between two springs of water, Silwan in Palestine and Zamzam in Mecca, al-Nabulusi reveals an interesting geo-poetical concern.<sup>14</sup> How can the water of Zamzam be salty when it is in the most virtuous place on earth? In tackling this question, Muslim scholars played on the meanings of the Arabic word 'ayn, which means both "spring" and "eye" to provide explanations. They depicted Mecca as the "eye" of the earth and Zamzam as the source of its water. Just as the water of the human eye is salty, so should be the water of Zamzam. But this poetic imagery leaves al-Nabulusi with an unsatisfactory image of a one-eyed earth! Resorting to his imaginative mapping of Jerusalem and Mecca to set things right, al-Nabulusi writes:

The saltiness of the eye's water is evidently true  
Not out of imperfection, but rather of perfection.  
For this reason Zamzam's water is salty  
And so is Silwan's; both are refreshingly cold.



These are the two eyes of the earth,  
One of the right, the other of the left.  
The right is in Mecca, the left in Jerusalem,  
Yet all the worlds are mere imagination.<sup>15</sup>

## NOTES

1 Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya fi al-Rihla al-Qudsiyya*, edited by A. al-'Ulabi (Beirut: al-Masadir, 1990). The journey took place in 1690 AD.

2 Samer Akkach, "Mapping Difference: On the Islamic Concept of fada'il," in *De-Placing Difference: Architecture, Culture and Imaginative Geography*, edited by S. Akkach, Proceedings of the third international symposium of the Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture (Adelaide: CAMEA, 2002), 9-21.

3 On mapping, see Denis Cosgrove (ed.), *Mappings*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999; and Geoff King, *Mapping Reality: An Exploration of Cultural Cartographies* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996).

4 King, 16.

5 D. Cosgrove, "Introduction: Mapping Meanings," in *Mappings*, 1-23.

6 See Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd Edition, "Fadila."

7 Yi-Fu Tuan, "Geopietry: A Theme in Man's Attachment to Nature and to Place," in *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geography*, edited by David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 11-39.

8 James Speculation, "Critique and Invention," in Cosgrove, *Mappings*, 213-52. See also, King, "The Map that Precedes the Territory," *Mapping Reality*, 1-17.

9 J. Corner, "The Agency of Mapping," in Cosgrove, *Mappings*, 213.

10 Christian Jacob, "Mapping in the Mind: The Earth from Ancient Alexandria," in Cosgrove, *Mappings*, 24-49.

11 J. B. Harley and D. Woodward (eds.), *History of Cartography*, II:1, *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 7.

12 Milka Levy-Rubin and Rehav Rubin, "The Image of the Holy City in Maps and Mapping," in *City of the Great King*, edited by Nitza Rosovsky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 352. For medieval map-making and visualisation in the Christian context, see Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Map-makers Viewed their World* (London: The British Library, 1997). Oleg Grabar, *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16. Grabar confirms the absence of maps of Jerusalem until the late Ottoman period.

13 Levy-Rubin and Rubin, 1996.

14 Al-Nabulusi, *al-Hadra al-Unsiyya*, 187-92.

15 Ibid., 190.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: A cosmic map from Ma'rifetname by the eighteenth-century mystic scholar Ibrahim Haqqi (d. 1780). The map shows the "topography" of the world, consisting of the earth and the skies, the underworld and the heavenly world, with all encompassed by the divine throne.

Figs. 2 & 3: Two maps by Heinrich Bünting (1545-1606), 1581. Europe, depicted in the form of a crowned Virgin, and Asia, depicted in the form of the famed Greek winged Horse, Pegasus.

Fig. 4: Al-Idrisi's World map, dated 1456.

JAMES ELKINS

## FROM BIRD-GODDESSES TO JESUS 2000: A VERY, VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF RELIGION AND ART

Sooner or later, anyone involved in the academic study of the arts will come across a strange problem: there is almost no modern religious art in museums or in books of Western art history. It is a problem that is at once obvious and odd, known to most who study art, yet hardly discussed.

### THE PROBLEM OF EVEN STARTING A CONVERSATION

For some people, art simply *is* religious, whether the artists admit it or not, for it expresses such things as the hope of transcendence or the possibilities of the human spirit. The absence of religious art from museums specializing in modernism is seemingly due to a kind of prejudice on the part of curators' narrow coterie of mainly academic writers who have not acknowledged what has always been apparent: art and religion are entwined. For example, Jackson Pollock is a religious painter even though neither he nor the serious critics of his work have thought of his work as religious.

Some believe that modern art like Pollock's *cannot* be religious, because it would undo the project of modernism by going against its own sense of itself, its nature, especially if modernism was predicated on the rejection of pre-modern institutions, religion among them. Some modernists were also suspicious of the nineteenth-century academic custom of *using* art to tell religious stories. A contemporary painting of the *Assumption of the Virgin* would be carrying on a moribund tradition of narrative painting, last encouraged at the end of the nineteenth century. Modernism, it could be said, has relinquished all that.

For others, Pollock's paintings might well be religious, but it is difficult to construct an acceptable argument describing how his works express religious feelings. The word *religious* can no longer be coupled with the driving ideas of mod-

ernist discourse. The two ways of talking have become alienated from each other, and it would be artificial and insensitive to bring them together.

And for others still, the whole problem is misstated, because Pollock might well be religious in some respects and non-religious or irreligious in others. There is no monolithic *art* any more than there is a property for it called *religious*. These terms are just too diffuse to work. What matters is the life of a particular Pollock painting. For example, there is a way to argue that Pollock's *Man/Woman* sustains religious ideas, but with *She-Wolf*, the correct domain of explanation might be Pollock's mid-twentieth-century sense of myth.

Some might argue that Pollock serves as a poor example to make the case that modernism is not religious because Abstract Expressionism effectively erases explicit symbols and stories in favor of non-verbal gestures. Look elsewhere in modernism, earlier abstract painters for example, and you will find plenty of religious art: Paul Klee made religious paintings, as did Marc Chagall and Georges Roualt. Modernism is bound to religion just as every movement before it has been.

The differences between these opinions run deep. For people in my profession of art history, the very fact that I have written this essay will be enough to cast me into a dubious category of fallen and marginal historians who do not understand modernism or postmodernism. But here, I am after something simple, and more introductory: to set out, in the briefest possible compass, the salient facts about the alienation of the academic discipline of art history and the study of religious meaning in art. I hope that what I have to say

will be taken generously, not as if this were the armature for a full history, but in the spirit I intend it: as an attempt to start conversations.

## ART AS RITUAL AND RELIGION

Once upon a time—but really, in every place and in every time—art was religious. Eight thousand years ago, Europe, Asia, and Africa were already full of sculpted gods, goddesses, and totemic animals. There were bull-gods and butterfly-gods, bird-goddesses and frog-goddesses, and deities that were nothing more than lumps of uncarved stone. Neolithic people left offerings, built altars, and etched pictures into rock walls.

Art was religious or at least ritualistic, and remained so in the earliest civilizations: in Sumer and Akkad, in Hittite and Phrygian Turkey, in Egypt and Persia. The inception of Christianity did not change art's religious purpose. In a lovely scene of the Madonna and Child in a landscape, from the beginning of the third century, a prophet stands to their right, raising his arms in a gesture that says, "Behold!" The figures sit in the shade of a small tree with oversize flowers. It must have been a refreshing scene to contemplate for the Christians who worshipped in the dank Catacomb of Priscilla, beneath the streets of Rome, and it serves as one example of the way in which the early Christian religion used painting as a mode of expression. Art continued to serve religion through the Renaissance.

In addition, what are known reflexively as art and religion were inseparable through much of the recorded history of China, India, and Mesoamerica. The same parallel and compatible purposes of art and religion can be found in images made by the Incas, the Scythians and Ite, the Moche and Cocoli, Jains and Phrygians, and even the people—whose name is lost—who built the pyramids at Teotihuacan.

## ART AS EXPRESSION

There is a problem with this history. Although there is plenty of religious painting after the Renaissance in Western art history—even at the beginning of the twenty-first century there is a tremendous amount of religious art—something happened in the Renaissance: the meaning of art changed. Art began to glorify the artist and artist's skills took precedence over the subject depicted.

This is a much-debated subject. Historians such as Hans Blumenberg and Hans Belting, and philosophers including Jürgen Habermas, have written histories of the West cen-

tered on the nature of this change.<sup>1</sup> Given Marx's critique of religion as an artifact of society, "any return to traditional values (from Catholic or Islamic fundamentalism to Oriental New Age wisdom) is doomed to fail" because it is "impotent in the face of the thrust of Capital."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the Protestant Reformation and Italian Counter-Reformation produced art that remains indispensable for understanding the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As the historian David Morgan argued, "Who can think of the Enlightenment without natural religion? Who can think of American democracy without Jefferson dissecting the New Testament to extract the moral teachings of Jesus?"<sup>3</sup>

It is a difficult problem. Yet on balance, I think more is risked by defending the presence of religion in post-Renaissance art than by insisting on its necessary absence. In the Renaissance, the representation of piety seeped into the codification of art. Art historians such as William Hood and Georges Didi-Huberman have tried to understand the delicate frames of mind that led painters like Fra Angelico to put humanist learning to the service of pious aims.<sup>4</sup>

By the eighteenth century, there were more signs of strain. When Francisco Goya was commissioned to make religious paintings, he suddenly became serious and dropped the bizarre imaginative license. North of the Pyrenees, François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard lost a sense of playfulness when they had to depict holy scenes. In effect, those artists split their oeuvres: painting itself worked differently in religious and secular contexts.

Biblical episodes and figures were still common in the nineteenth century, but they were handled differently from secular themes. For the painter Ary Sheffer, religious commissions were matters of the most pole-faced sobriety; Thomas Couture made stupendous paintings of the ancient world, bursting with gold, swags of luscious red drapery, spilling cornucopias, and dancing maidens, but his religious work is at once ambitious and entirely unconvincing. For such painters, religious commissions were a duty, prosecuted soberly and honorably. Painting itself—its highest possibilities and ambitions—often had to be pursued outside of religious commissions.

Some nineteenth-century artists were rabid atheists but many others, including Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Thomas Cole practiced their faiths.

But when do these facts aid in an understanding of the painting? Caspar David Friedrich and Otto Philip Runge were religious: Runge was a pious Lutheran, and Friedrich was a Pietist. Runge's *Die Tageszeiten* paintings were intended for a Gothic church he designed, and one of Friedrich's first paintings was an elaborate altarpiece. Yet Runge's work was iconographically eccentric, while Friedrich's was often stripped of explicit religious meaning. Friedrich experimented with images of nature infused with a nameless, almost pantheistic spirit, and Runge made dazzling paintings with idiosyncratic figures. Though these artists were not atheists or even "non-religious," the manifestations of Christianity in nineteenth-century art by artists such as Friedrich, Runge, William Blake, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and Samuel Palmer (who painted bizarre and intense visions of English countryside), were subjective and often inimical to ordinary liturgical use.<sup>5</sup>

At this point the relation of art and religion could be clarified: gradually, the most inventive and interesting art separated itself from religious themes in Western art history. By the time of the Impressionists, there did not seem to be room left for religion at all. Monet was preoccupied with light and color, Seurat was bent on taking painting to a new formal stage, while Cézanne was interested in capturing nature faithfully.

At the same time, religion persistently rose to the surface like a half-sunken boat. At the turn of the century, some lesser-known painters, such as Arnold Böcklin, Ferdinand Knopff, and Odilon Redon worked in a mystical space between painting and poetry. Van Gogh had very passionate, if obscure, thoughts about how his art worked as religion, although art historians tend to avoid the subject his confused thoughts on art, nature, miracles, and divinity. The book *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, for example, skims over the religious meaning of paintings such as *Starry Night* in favor of an analysis of the picture's geographical location and its secular literary sources.<sup>6</sup>

## RELIGION IN THE PEDAGOGY OF MODERNISM

But now, a hundred years later, it appears that religion has sunk out of sight. The mainstreams of modernism, beginning with Cézanne and Picasso and including Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism, were increasingly alienated from religion. Surrealism's rejection of religion took a particularly intransigent form on account of Sigmund Freud's critique of God imagined as a projection.<sup>7</sup> It is telling that the major book connecting Surrealism to religion, *Surrealism and the*

*Sacred*, is written by an artist and not an historian; it belongs more to the contemporary revival of Jungian-inspired spirituality than to the historiography of Surrealism.<sup>8</sup> Most pop art, minimalism, conceptual art, video, and installation art seems miles away from religion. Such art can often be *understood* as religious, but it is not often intended to be religious.

If you pick up one of the heavy surveys of twentieth-century art, like H.H. Arnason's *History of Modern Art*, you may get the impression that artists stopped working for the church around the time of the French Revolution; before that, most European painting was religious.<sup>9</sup> Arnason begins his book with a lightning review of pre-modern art from Van Eyck to Raphael, including Matthias Grünewald's nearly insane *Isenheim Altarpiece* (1512-15, Colmar). The 800 pages of the book barely discuss works that focus on religious themes. There is a photograph of Barnett Newman standing rigidly in front of his paintings of the *Stations of the Cross* (1966, National Gallery of Art, Washington), each canvas reduced to a severely abstract pattern of "zips," as he called them (stripes against a white ground). Another page shows one of Emil Nolde's religious paintings, the *Last Supper* (1909, Copenhagen), painted when he was in a kind of ecstatic trance.

There is also a reproduction of Salvador Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (1951, Glasgow), but it is more an example of Dalí's "paranoiac-critical" surrealist method than a religious painting. After all, the crucified Christ is shown hovering uncomfortably, head-down in a deep azure sky; he looks like the enormous spacecraft in the movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Just a few other artists out of the thousands in Arnason's book depict religious themes, among them Georges Roualt, Marc Chagall, and the English painters Graham Sutherland and Francis Bacon. Arnason chose one of Bacon's gruesome early pictures in which the crucified Christ is replaced by an animal carcass, with a monstrous man in a business suit sitting below, holding an umbrella to keep the blood from pouring onto him.

Among these slim pickings, there is only one work that is actually in a church—or even presented in its setting—Matisse's designs for the little Chapel of the Rosary of the Dominican nuns in Vence, France (1951). It might be the only example of twentieth-century painting that is both a consecrated religious work and also a certified member of the canon of modernism. Jean Cocteau's church murals in Villefranche-sur-Mer just east of Nice, France, and those in



the chapel Saint-Blaise des Simples in Milly-la-Forêt are often reproduced, but they are not the most important of Cocteau's works. Maurice Denis's chapel in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, is a fascinating example of modernist Catholic art, but it is seldom considered alongside contemporaneous non-religious modernism.

### ...AND IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Contemporary art, I think, is as far from organized religion as Western art has ever been. This may be its most singular achievement or its cardinal failure, depending on your point of view. The separation has become entrenched: professional art critics do not write about artists who follow major religions. In schools and departments of art, religion is considered irrelevant to the production of interesting art: religion is understood to be something private, something that need not be brought into the teaching of art. When the art world discusses religion, it is because there has been a scandal: someone has painted a Madonna using elephant dung, or has put a statuette of Jesus into a jar of urine.<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, religion is seldom mentioned.

But religious art thrives outside of the art world. People gather to see miraculous images that seem to weep real tears, and the stories make the evening news. In the 1990s, a Moiré pattern in the glass of a curtain-wall office building in Clearwater, Florida was interpreted as an enormous apparition of the Virgin Mary. Indeed, the iridescent image captured in a snapshot looks like the outline of any Renaissance or Baroque painting of the Virgin.<sup>11</sup> In the United States, such reports are much more common than in Europe. They testify to a widespread interest in images that have religious significance.

In the popular press, the goal of art is sometimes imagined as a fundamentally religious undertaking. Sister Wendy Beckett speaks eloquently about modern art as if it were all religious. In 1999, she judged an international competition, *Jesus 2000*, to find the perfect image of Jesus for the millennium.<sup>12</sup> There were over a thousand entries from nineteen different countries. Sister Wendy's pick for the winner was Janet McKenzie's *Jesus of the People*, a painting of Christ as an African-American man. Christ's body had been modeled from a woman's body, and McKenzie painted Native American symbols in the background. The contest was written up in newspapers across the country. One report in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* described a local woman's entry, a depiction of Jesus as a middle-aged man wearing a baseball cap, standing on a country road with a



1

dead-end sign in the background.<sup>13</sup> The artist explained that she had modeled the figure on a homeless man, but had given it her father's body, her own hair, and her daughter's nose. With her description, the painting could have been taken as a touching act of devotion; but these entries have not been considered as part of academic discourse.

### AN EQUALLY BRIEF PROGNOSIS

The conclusion of this history is obviously that fine art and religious art have parted ways within the context of academic discourse and pedagogy. The difference between art and art-as-religion can be made visible in many ways. The University of California at Berkeley is adjacent to a Theological Union. Although the faculties have amicable relations, their purposes and understandings of art are radically different. Students in the Theological Union are studying for religious vocations, and they tend to study art as a spiritual vehicle. Students in the Department of Art History

are preparing for careers as college professors and curators; when works of art are religious, they note it just as if the art were politically oriented, concerned with gender, or of interest for its recondite allusions.

Most ambitious and successful contemporary fine art is thoroughly non-religious. Most New Age and spiritual art—contemporary art made for churches—is—this is blunt, because it needs to be said—just bad art. It is not just because the artists are less talented than Jasper Johns or Andy Warhol: it is because art that sets out to convey spiritual values goes against the grain of history. The pressure of history is crucial: it has to be decided before it can be possible to seriously weigh academic and non-academic descriptions of religion and art.

## NOTES

1 Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, translated by Robert Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983); Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

2 Slavoj Žižek, *The Spectre is Still Roaming Around! An Introduction to the 150th Anniversary Edition of the Communist Manifesto* (Zagreb: Arkzin, 1998), 72.

3 Personal correspondence with David Morgan, 20 May, 2002.

4 William Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*,

translated by Jane Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

5 David Morgan provided the information on the artists' religious affiliations, although the conclusion I draw is my own.

6 *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*, edited by Douglas Druck and Peter Zegers (Chicago: The Art Institute, 2001).

7 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, translated from the German by Katherine Jones (New York, Vintage Books, c1967).

8 Celia Rabinovitch, *Surrealism and the Sacred. Power, Eros, and the Occult in Modern Art* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002). In my experience, the influence of Jung is often pervasive and indirect in art instruction, but writers cite secondary sources, such as Joseph Campbell, instead of Jung's primary texts. See also Carol Becker's use of an analysis of the trickster figure in Carol Becker, "Brooklyn Museum: Messing with the Sacred," *Surpassing the Spectacle: Global Transformations and the Changing Politics of Art* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 43-58.

9 H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art*, fourth edition, edited by Marla Prather Arnason (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998).

10 For Chris Ofili's *Holy Virgin Mary* and Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*, see Becker, 43-58.

11 *Divine Mirrors: The Virgin Mary in the Visual Arts*, edited by Melissa Katz and Robert Orsi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), illustration on p. 7, credited to Guss Wilder III.

12 "Jesus 2000," special issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*, edited by Michael Farrell (December 24, 1999).

13 Greg Bischof, "Artist Depicts Christ for New Millennium," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* (January 1, 2000): D11.

## ILLUSTRATION

Fig. 1: Janet McKenzie, *Jesus of the People*, 48" x 30" oil on canvas

## CAROLINE JONES RESPONDS

James,

*Your "Very, Very Brief History" is admirably polemical, but, as such, leaves us stuffed with arguments and questions. The broadest view of modernism's relation to religion might situate the museum object as replacing the ritual one—the altarpiece becomes available as art as soon as it is taken from the cathedral and placed in Le Louvre. A ritual aesthetic function replaces the ritual religious function. This one-way street, as Benjamin might have called it, charts a historical path that is difficult to reverse—and this, I take it, is the story you seek to tell. Nonetheless, I think there is tremendous eschatological energy fueling twentieth-century (and early twenty-first century) art, and a thwarted appetite for "reading" religion in contemporary art.*

*Let the conversation begin,*

—Caroline

Caroline,

I am happy to have the chance to frame this essay, and try to answer your questions. Let me first interpose two points.

The essay is rather ruthlessly condensed from a book about the place of religion in contemporary art (forthcoming, 2003). The book is aimed at a very wide readership: so wide that part of my interest in the project was trying not to alienate its potentially far-flung readers. There is an enormous community of religious practitioners outside of academia for whom modernism and postmodernism have yet to produce more than a sprinkling of viable religious objects. (The best scholar of that wider public, I think, is David Morgan.) For that community, the book I have written may seem too *little* concerned with religion. In fact, a major religious press originally requested the book, but it was turned down on the grounds that it was mainly about art and not religion.

However, the community of art students is sometimes just as far-flung. What can be done about the fact that religious discourse is so often excluded from studio critiques? Many art students create works that cannot be identified with any major religion, but which are, nevertheless, clearly spiritual. In my experience, it is rare to find studio art instructors or art critics who are willing to address the religious aspects

of such work unless, of course, the art is clearly critical of religion, adapts an ironic tone, or is privately spiritual in the way Bettye Saar's altars are. From an art student's point of view, words like "religion," and even "spirituality," may be inappropriate: they sound clumsy or literal, and students tend to avoid them even when they are the best available terms to describe the work. Serious, content-oriented religious criticism is virtually absent from current art instruction. So, my book is also meant to reassure readers that I will *not* be using words like religion as if they were adequate or even appropriately descriptive.

The third community of readers—the historians interested in modern and contemporary art, who sometimes speak a language different from either of the other groups—may be most embarrassed by the question of religion, though most in need of asking it. I hope their different perspectives partly explain the tone and rhetorical frame of the essay.

I propose a couple of quite specific definitions for "religion" and "spirituality." The deliberately narrow meanings I would like to adopt change the terms of the argument somewhat. Let me take "religion," then, to mean any named, organized, institutional system of beliefs, including the trappings of such systems: the rituals, liturgies, catechisms, calendars, holy days, vestments, prayers, hymns and songs, homilies, obligations, sacraments, confessions, vows, bar mitzvahs, pilgrimages, credos, commandments, and sacred texts. Religion is therefore public and social, requiring observance, priests, ministers, rabbis, or mullahs, choirs or cantors, and the congregation. A good foil for this sense of religion is "spirituality." What I mean by spirituality—again, only for the purposes of this essay and the book—is any private, subjective, largely or wholly incommunicable, often wordless and sometimes even unacknowledged system of beliefs. Spirituality in this sense is only part of religion. Artists, I would argue, often try to discard the trappings of religion, in order to arrive at something that I think has to be called by a different name—spirituality.

Given those two definitions, let me try to answer some of your questions.

*Jones: Isn't your view of abstraction very literal (or, as Michael Fried might say, "literalist?") All you have to do is move three feet over in the Museum of Modern Art, and you would see Barnett Newman's *Covenant*, or heaven forbid, the magisterial *The Stations of the Cross*: Lemi Sabachthani at the National Gallery of Art. In what sense is the Newman-*

*Rothko-Morris Louis axis of sublimated Talmudic painting any less "about" religion than the haloed lady with the baby?*

You ask whether modernist works are "any less 'about' religion than the haloed lady with the baby." I would say they are, and I propose that the fulcrum of the argument is in the "about." From a religious practitioner's point of view, an enormous gulf exists between work that is "about" religion and work that can function in religious ritual. In that sense, modern and contemporary art really is profoundly non-religious. Art world venues admit work that is ironic about religion, that is openly critical of religion, that comments on religion, that modifies religious forms and symbols, that is private and spiritual (in the sense I intend), but it does not admit straightforward, sincere *instances* of religious work. Artworks can be *spiritual*, and they can be *about* religion, but they cannot be religious. For example, many religious groups have used the Rothko chapel over the years (including, for example, Zoroastrians), and I am happy to admit them all as counterexamples to my thesis. A few years ago, I spent several days reading every one of the visitors' books that have been kept since the chapel opened. There are thousands of comments, and most are about the paintings as abstraction or somehow *about* religion. When the comments mention religion, they usually describe the paintings as ambiguous or otherwise troubling *references* to religious meaning. I hope my sense of modernism isn't "literal" if I make the distinction between works that are "about" religion and those that can function in religious settings, for religious purposes. The Rothko chapel has long done both, but isn't it the exception that proves the rule? Of contemporary art production, how many works have functioned as religious objects?

*Jones: I want to argue with your history of modernism, as well as art. Wasn't the European painter "split" even more in the age of manuscript marginalia than in the supposedly modern period? The sacred geometry of the page enforced the separation of an outer world of farting cuckolds and an inner world of divine visions, mediated by the Word. Instead, the modern humanist subject was supposed to become a unified soul.*

This is an enormous question which I cannot address very well here. In my mind, it leads directly into the contemporary historiography of medieval art, especially in the work of the recently deceased Michael Camille. His debates with

Hans Belting concerning the "modernity" of medieval art are important but unresolved steps.

*Jones: What are the "essentials of religious meaning" Friedrich strips? What could be more essential in its religiosity (essentially, in a German sense) than a romantic churchyard or a cross on a mountain? It seems to me that modern artists were, and are, constantly struggling to find contemporaneous ways to speak the divine (if always outside the official strictures of the church).*

No one knows how Friedrich intended to use his altar, and no one can quite say how his cromlechs, ruined churches, or wayside shrines carry religious meaning. Joseph Koerner's reading—that they are metaphors of self, presence, and memory—is far from religion; and some other readings are too close because they see things like cromlechs as simple signifiers of Friedrich's sense of religion, whatever that may be. It is entirely true that "modern artists were, and are, constantly struggling to find contemporaneous ways to speak the divine." In the vocabulary I propose, "divine" is closer to spirituality than religion: it is private, non-social, and partly incommunicable. Erasing the difference between the largely illegible evidence of Friedrich's spirituality in his paintings, and contemporary German Pietism (Friedrich's religion), would also erase the distance between his fragmentary iconography and contemporaneous religious iconography. I want to maintain that difference, and distance.

*Jones: Is your theory confounded by the fact that Van Gogh worked as a lay preacher during the period of the Potato Eaters? There seems to be a confusion in your account between the spiritual aspirations of the artists, the embarrassment of art history over "modern religious art" at the Vatican, and the continuous use of images—even modern ones—in popular religion throughout the twentieth century (see the illustration of Frank Stella's cruciform copper painting in a 1960s article about Teilhard de Chardin). Would a theory of reception be more pertinent?*

Is my theory "confounded" by these facts? I hope not! Since you mention theories of reception, and since we are both interested in them, let me mention Carol Zemel's excellent work on Van Gogh—a model of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Van Gogh has certainly been evaluated as a religious painter. Otherwise, it would be hard to account for his popularity. But what, exactly, is religious



about the art? For some people, it has been necessary to find overt symbols where none may exist: heavenly apparitions, Last Judgments, and symbols of the incarnation. A recent exhibition we had at the Art Institute in Chicago, *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, is a nice illustration of the problem. In the very detailed catalog, there is only a single paragraph devoted to the “spiritual” meanings of *Starry Night*, because as historians, we are justifiably wary of speculating, which is exactly what Van Gogh forces us to do. My own sense is that he was conflicted and not fully articulate about the ways his art worked as religious and the ways it referred to religion. The history of reception indicates that this very point continues to perplex viewers.

**Jones:** *“Contemporary art, I think, is as far from organized religion as Western art has ever been...” Nonsense. Visit Marina Abramovic, granddaughter of a Serbian saint, fasting away in the Sean Kelly gallery this month (through December 2002). Or go check out Damien Hirst’s crucified skeleton, Chris Ofili’s Nigerian-rap Madonna, Ann Hamilton’s penitential table of weeping teeth, or Kiki Smith’s Madonna performance on the parade to MoMA in Queens. From a few decades back, see Chris Burden’s relics, Beuys and his dead hare, De Maria’s minimalist Star of David, or Hannah Wilke’s Intra-Venus. The breakdown of modernism into postmodernism only fueled an ongoing effort to continue to import ever more of the standard concerns of religion into art (note the substantial postmodern literature on the sublime, for example). Do you really think you can tell the “grain of history” from a quick paging through of the modernist canon, as witnessed in Arnason?*

Here, you say my assertion that contemporary art is as far from religion as art practices ever have been, is “nonsense.” This is the crux of the matter. In one sense, it is true that my claim is “nonsense” because there are many artists who work with religious themes. (The ones you name are almost

all in my book, and of course there are hundreds more.) But such art is *about* religion; it doesn’t *instantiate* religion. When contemporary artwork is called “religious,” I become worried that we may lose the ability to make a distinction between images like those judged by Sister Wendy for the *National Catholic Reporter*, which can and do work in churches, and those which refer to religion from within an art world context. I worry that the claim that art and religion are still productively mingled can underwrite the further claim that the art world and the institutions and artists involved in popular religion are effectively intertwined. (As they seem to be, for example, in the work of Christian Jankowski.) To me, differences run deep and need to be theorized, as Victor Taylor (*Para/Inquiry*) and Mark Taylor (*Disfiguring*) have tried to do. And I worry, too, about the effect on art-teaching if the near-absence of critical discourse on religious meaning is taken as an asked-and-answered question. Arnason is not an authority (thank goodness!) but even the few examples he cites nearly all involve references to religious practices. They are not, in pragmatic terms, viable as religious objects outside of art-world contexts. Burden’s relics are a perfect example of what I am provisionally calling “spiritual” work; so are Beuys’s fetish objects, and even Spero’s stenciled figures and Kiefer’s burned books...*that* list is endless. But consider how very few examples there are of religious works made for churches or used in religious ceremonies: Matisse’s Chapel in Vence, Cocteau’s church murals in Villefranche-sur-Mer, and a half-dozen others—as against the hundreds of thousands of works that are secular, ironic, or largely private.

I hope this makes sense and that I have convinced you just a little. The whole subject is fascinating to me not least because it seems so nearly impossible to frame for all audiences: a sure sign that it is buried very deeply in our use of language and critique.

Architekt  
SCHAROUN

EIN Z. PREIS



# FLORIAN URBAN

## THE SPIRIT OF THE CITY: TRANSCENDENCE AND URBAN DESIGN IN POSTWAR BERLIN

### HAUPTSTADT BERLIN

In 1958, thirteen years after the war had ended, the city of West Berlin, in collaboration with the West German Government in Bonn, organized a peculiar competition. Architects and urban planners were asked for proposals to redesign both halves of Berlin's divided inner city as the center for a German capital. The participants had to base their entries on the imaginary grounds that Berlin was reunified, that they had unlimited financial resources, and that they possessed infinite political power.<sup>1</sup> Although the political and economical preconditions were deeply unrealistic, the competition, *Hauptstadt Berlin* (Capital Berlin), was anything but utopian. The planning guidelines to which the participants had to adhere were taken from existing Western European cities. Regarded as "the most important competition in Europe," *Hauptstadt Berlin* was paradigmatic for urban design practice in the postwar era.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly all the proposals advocated a comprehensive destruction of Berlin's historic urban fabric, even though a significant portion had survived the war and could have been restored.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, competition organizers, participants, and commentators repeatedly emphasized nostalgia for the site and wanted to maintain the historic continuity of the proposed new city with the metropolis of the prewar era. This apparent contradiction was tightly connected to a conception of the city as a spiritual entity. Most proposals were imbued with the idea of a transcendental urban force—a "spirit of the city." This concept, which was promoted by participants and critics, has to be related both to the experience of the wartime destruction in Berlin and to the notion of progress and renewal that had been developed in the prewar era. The pattern of representing the city in quasi-religious terms proved consequential for the remod-

eling of Berlin and other German cities in subsequent decades, and accounted for a number of difficulties with which the city still has to contend at both the social and the infrastructural level.

### RESTRUCTURING THE HISTORIC CENTER

The jury of the *Hauptstadt Berlin* competition included West Berlin's Head of Construction Hans Stephan, the architects Otto Bartning, Werner Hebebrand, and Edgar Wedepohl, and numerous other prominent architects and construction officials.<sup>4</sup> With the exception of Cornelius van Eesteren from Amsterdam, Pierre Vago from Paris, and Alvar Aalto from Helsinki, all jurors were German. They promoted a homogeneous vision of a modernist city, with functional separation, loosely dispersed high-rise buildings, and the primacy of the automobile. With respect to both its break from the existing city and the scale of the proposed streets and buildings, the most radical proposal was not that of the first prize winner, the office of Spengelin, Eggeling, Pempelfort, but rather that of Hans Scharoun and Wils Ebert, who were awarded one of two second prizes (Fig. 1).<sup>5</sup>

Journalist Erich Link singled out Scharoun and Ebert's competition entry as a "truly great design proposal," whose essence could be summarized by its extraordinary "human scale."<sup>6</sup> Sabina Lietzmann pointed out that the proposal's great achievement lay in its "respect for the historically given fixed points in Berlin's inner city" and in the fact that it conserved "the layout of the old city plan."<sup>7</sup> Today, these judgments are profoundly baffling since the implementation of Scharoun and Ebert's proposal would have required the demolition of nearly all of the surviving prewar buildings, including some historic monuments that the competition organizers had listed as "fixed points," meaning that their

preservation was desirable, though not required. Scharoun and Ebert proposed an inner city scattered with solitary buildings spread at great distances from each other, surrounded by enormous pedestrian zones. Some of the buildings would measure more than ten times the width of Berlin's broadest boulevard, Unter den Linden. As a consequence of the strictly asymmetric outlines of buildings and surrounding areas, the prewar street plan would be wiped out. In order to maintain the huge pedestrian spaces and to keep motor traffic low, the plan proposed even more enormous subterranean parking lots. The largest would be situated under an area in the southern Friedrichstadt, approximately five hundred meters wide and two kilometers long, indicated by the horizontal, slightly bent structure in the lower third of the drawing. Berlin's inner city, as a whole, would be accessible through numerous six- to eight-lane freeways which far exceeded the competition organizers' requirements. Some of the proposed lanes were more than one hundred meters wide, cutting through residential neighborhoods that had been spared by wartime destruction. Due to the enormous scale of buildings and traffic areas, the coherence and consistency of Scharoun and Ebert's city design proposal could hardly be experienced by the pedestrian user of these spaces, but would be limited to the bird's-eye-view of the plan.

## WORLD CITY SPIRIT

In his call for proposals, West Berlin's Head of Construction and jury member Hans Stephan emphasized that, "the spiritual task (*die geistige Aufgabe*) of the competition...is to revive and express the image of a world city (*das Bild einer Weltstadt*) and capital Berlin in a modern...form."<sup>8</sup> The belief in a spiritual essence of the city, which pervaded the competition, was epitomized by the term *Weltstadt* (World City). *Weltstadt* was first and foremost a cultural assertion, explicitly rooted in the international significance that the city had had before the war. Organizers and participants repeatedly stressed their commitment to the "spirit" (*Geist*) of prewar Berlin, implying that a quintessential metaphysical force—unalterable by political and economic change or even demolition—was still inherent in the present city of ruins and political division. Since this culturally defined "spirit of the city" was unaffected by the aggression implicit in the Nazi capital's claims for metropolitan significance, it was able to warrant an unambiguously positive conception of historic continuity.

In Hans Scharoun's plan for Berlin, the "spirit of the city" was omnipresent. Scharoun claimed that the city's meta-

physical essence, solidified in a primordial image, constituted the foundation of urban life. In *Hauptstadt Berlin*, he explicitly connected this notion of spirit to a remote (and better) past:

In order to liberate us from the grips of a concept that has become alien to the city's nature (i.e. the nineteenth-century notion of the city), we need a fundamental idea, such as that which was still alive in the context of the medieval city. We have to regain...the spiritually based notion of structure, because this is the only way to reintegrate the civilizing impulse into our cities in a meaningful way.<sup>9</sup>

Treating urban structure as a spiritual element, Scharoun thus established the diagrammatic simplicity of a city plan as an *a priori* value.

The main characteristic of Scharoun's "structure" was a clarity and comprehensibility that could be experienced immediately:

Contemporary representations of medieval cities show the clarity of the city and the comprehensibility of its structure as a pictorial form (*gestalt-bildhaft*) in the same way the city presents itself to the gaze of the arriving traveler. The big city (of the present) does not allow for a repetition of such a silhouette effect. Its essence can only be experienced optically from the core—from the inside. In Berlin, this is offered through the large space of the Tiergarten (the Central Park); the areas close to the Tiergarten are provided with the corresponding form (*Gestalt*).<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Scharoun regarded his submission to the *Hauptstadt Berlin* as a "solution in accordance with the nature of the city."<sup>11</sup> According to Scharoun, it was this spiritual "nature of the city" that lies at the bottom of the form-giving process.

We believe that what we can achieve at the moment is the organic form of the building, the city, and the society.... Therefore, our task is to strive for form, to tackle the "secret of form" (*Geheimnis der Gestalt*). This striving for form is an issue of the spirit (*Geist*)—"spirit happens, spirit is an event."<sup>12</sup>





2

This line of thought can be traced back to the prewar era and Fritz Schumacher, who conceived of a building, and even more so, a city, as acting like an "organism" or a "living thing."<sup>13</sup>

The fundamental problem of Scharoun's "spiritually-based notion of structure" is its ambiguous representation. Since he considered it profoundly wrong to "let the picturesque of the romantic medieval city distract us from the structure that is so essential and important for us," he resisted translating his structure into a formal reference to the historic city.<sup>14</sup> Not the form, but the intrinsic structure of the historic city, its "fundamental idea," was supposed to guide his design. Regarding this idea as an objective regulatory principle, Scharoun thus feigned the general validity of his individual experience. At the same time, he generated a powerful new urban paradigm.

The methodological device Scharoun used to shape his model concept divorced the city from its verbal and pictorial representation. Since clarity and comprehensibility are

flexible terms, the "spirit of the city" lacks a formal equivalent. The spiritual conception of the city, tied to a lasting structure of the city, became a matter of faith. It seems that in the 1950s, Scharoun and his contemporaries had sublimated their experience of rupture and wartime destruction and their desire for comprehensive renewal into the quasi-religious belief in the "unalterable essence of the city," which they deemed fundamentally ahistorical and thus, possessing eternal validity. This conviction inspired their persuasive model. The city was seen as imbued with the spirit of historic continuity. As a self-sufficient "organic" body, it was supposed to work autonomously according to primordial laws. In the debate surrounding the *Hauptstadt Berlin* competition, it became apparent that the role of the hermetic images and verbal representations that attempted to capture the "spirit of the city" was to stabilize and monitor this new urban model concept.

The destruction of the historic urban fabric, which the entries to the *Hauptstadt Berlin* competition proposed and which was carried out in many German cities in the decade

that followed, was closely related to a mindset that framed the city in quasi-religious terms. The analysis of the debate over the competition also shows that all participants, organizers, and onlookers connected the promise of a better future to a nostalgic account of the past. Throughout the competition, memories of the prewar period were frozen into fixed images, endowed with new significance, and translated into an aesthetic scheme. Thus, architects and critics developed a concept of the city as an autonomous, hermetic organism permeated by a spiritual essence. This model was characterized by a self-referential logic, and was tied to an idea of historic continuity that functioned independently from the existence of historic urban fabric. The examination of the *Hauptstadt Berlin* competition shows how this model was controlled by a specific way of representing the city in spiritual terms, both on a rhetorical and on a pictorial level. The effects of this process, both in the physical form of the city and in the debate on urban restructuring, are still felt.

## NOTES

1 Carola Hein, "Planungsgrundlagen für den städtischen Ideenwettbewerb 'Hauptstadt Berlin'—Denkschrift Berlin" (Call for proposals for the competition "Hauptstadt Berlin," 1957), in *Hauptstadt Berlin. Internationaler städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58*, edited by Helmut Geisert, Doris Haneberg, and Carola Hein, Berlinische Galerie (Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, c1990), 298. Catalog for an exhibition at the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin from 3 November 1990 to 6 January 1991.

2 "Bedeutendster Wettbewerb Europas," *Der Tagesspiegel* (June 29, 1958).

3 Most scholars believe that more historic buildings were demolished as a result of urban renewal in postwar Berlin than had been destroyed during the war. Compare Wolfgang Schäche, "Von der Stunde Null und der Legende des Wiederaufbaus," in *Wendzeiten in Architektur und Stadtplanung* in the series *Arbeitshefte des Instituts für Stadt- und Regionalplanung der TU Berlin* Vol. 36, edited by Erich Konter (Berlin: Universitätsbibliothek der Technischen Universität Berlin, 1986), 79; and Wolfgang Schäche and Wolfgang J. Streich, "Wiederaufbau oder Neuaufbau? Über die Legende der total zerstörten Stadt," in *IFP Stadtentwicklung Berlin nach 1945, ISR-Diskussionsbeitrag* Nr. 17, edited by Wolfgang Schäche and Wolfgang J. Streich (Berlin, 1985), 44. In 1945, approximately fifty percent of Berlin's inner city was destroyed.

4 Hein, 445.

5 From 1945 to 1946, Hans Scharoun (1893-1972) was the director of the (still undivided) city planning commission, where he authored the first comprehensive reconstruction plan for all of Berlin. In 1946, he became the director of the urban design program at West Berlin's *Technische Universität*, a position he

held until his retirement in 1958. In addition, from 1955 to 1963, he was the president of the renowned *Akademie der Künste*. Wils Ebert was a Berlin-based architect. The jury awarded the first prize to the office of Friedrich Spengelin, Fritz Eggeling, and Gerd Pempelfort, based in Hamburg and Hanover. The other second prize was given to Egon Hartmann (Mainz) and Walter Nickert (Gelsenkirchen). *Hauptstadt Berlin*, 1990, 445-446.

6 Erich Link, "Eine City ohne Zukunft? Glanz und Elend eines Wettbewerbs," *Die Kultur* (March 1, 1959). "Der Begriff 'menschlicher Maßstab'...trifft bei Scharoun/Ebert die 'Kennzeichnung der Substanz.'"

7 Sabina Lietzmann, "Der Ideenwettbewerb 'Hauptstadt Berlin,'" *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (August 17, 1958). "Der Grundriß der alten Stadtanlage ist im übrigen gewahrt, wie überhaupt bei allen Entwürfen ein Respekt vor den historisch gegebenen Fixpunkten der Berliner City zu beobachten ist."

8 Hans Stephan, "Hauptstadt Berlin. Ein politischer Wettbewerb," *Bauen und Wohnen* 3 (1959): 105. "Als geistige Aufgabe des Wettbewerbs war gefordert, daß die Wiederaufbauvorschläge in moderner... Form das Bild einer Welt- und Hauptstadt Berlin wieder sichtbar zum Ausdruck bringen sollten." Quoted by Hubert Hoffmann.

9 Hans Scharoun, "Vom Stadt-Wesen und Architekt-Sein" [speech at the award ceremony for the Fritz-Schumacher-Prize in Hamburg, dated December 9, 1954], *Hans Scharoun: Bauten, Entwürfe, Texte*, edited by Peter Pfannkuch, in the series *Schriftenreihe der Akademie der Künste* Vol. 10, Berlin, 1993, 229. "Es bedarf der Kraft einer tragenden Idee, wie sie in diesem Zusammenhang in der mittelalterlichen Stadt noch lebendig war, um uns aus den Klammern eines wesensfremd gewordenen Begriffs [das Konzept der vormodernen Stadt] zu befreien. [Den] seelisch-geistig fundierten Strukturbegriff...müssen wir zurückgewinnen, weil dann wieder ein sinnvolle Einbindung des Zivilisatorischen möglich sein wird."

10 Ibid., 231. "Zeitgenössische Darstellungen mittelalterlicher Städte zeigen gestaltbildhaft das Überschaubare der Stadt und die Erfassbarkeit ihrer Struktur—so wie sie sich dem Blick des Ankommenden erschließt. Die Großstadt gestattet keine Wiederholung solcher silhouettenhaften Wirkung. Ihr Wesen ist nur vom Kern her—vom Inneren her—optisch erschließbar. In Berlin ist dies durch den weiten Raum des Tiergartens geboten, den dem Tiergarten nahen Stadtteilen entsprechende Gestalt gegeben."

11 Hans Scharoun, "Beschreibung des Wettbewerbsentwurfs für Hauptstadt Berlin" [description of the competition entry for "Hauptstadt Berlin," dated Sept 9, 1958], in *Scharoun Nachlass*, archive of the Berlin Akademie der Künste Berlin, Nachlass n. 212. "Wesensgemäße Lösung" [i.e. dem Wesen der Stadt gemäß].

12 Hans Scharoun, 1954, 232. "Wir meinen, das uns zur Zeit Erreichbare ist die Organform des Bauwerkes, der Stadt und der Gesellschaft... Unsere Aufgabe also ist das Gestalten, das Angehen des 'Geheimnisses der Gestalt.' Dieses Gestalten ist eine Sache des Geistes—Geist geschieht, Geist ist Ereignis."

13 Fritz Schumacher, *Der Geist der Baukunst* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1938), 206.

14 Hans Scharoun, 1954, 229. "...sich durch das Malerische der romantischen,

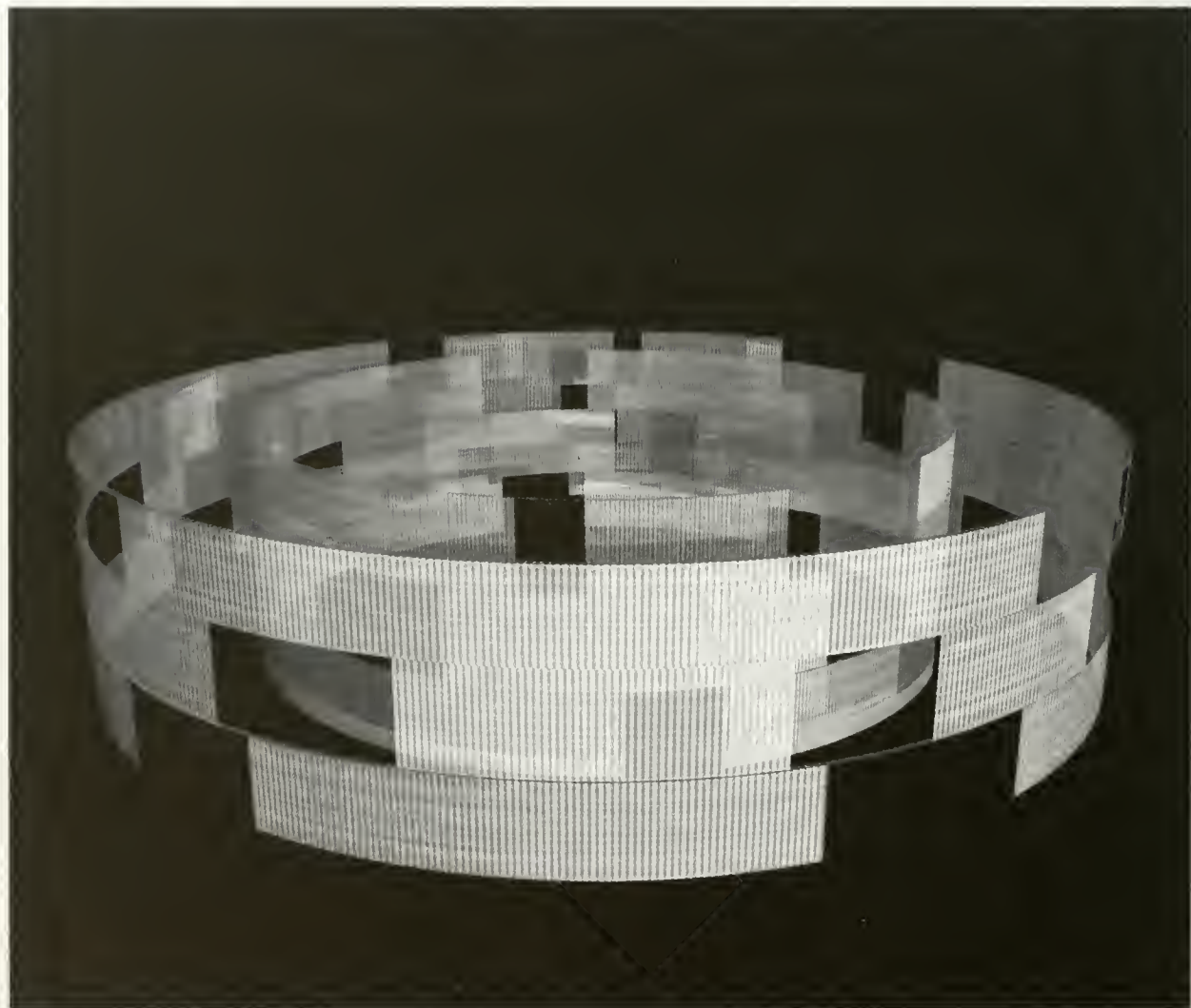
mittelalterlichen Stadt in ihrer für uns wesenhaften und wichtigen Struktur ablenken zu lassen.“

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: *Hauptstadt Berlin. Internationaler städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58*, 1990, 81. Scharoun and Ebert's proposal for the *Hauptstadt Berlin* competition.

Fig. 2: Scharoun and Ebert's proposal for the *Hauptstadt Berlin* competition

(detail) The small building with four towers in the middle is the *Reichstag*, which the participants were required to preserve according to the competition guidelines. The government center is to the left of the *Reichstag*. In the upper right corner stands Museum Island with the *Schlossplatz*, next to the octagonal *Leipziger Platz*. In the lower right corner is the detail of a shopping center and the enormous subterranean parking structure. Picture taken from *Berlinische Galerie*, ed., *Hauptstadt Berlin. Internationaler städtebaulicher Ideenwettbewerb 1957/58*, Berlin, 1990, 79





## JAE CHA CHURCH IN URUBO, BOLIVIA

This project is in Urubo, a rural village twenty minutes by car from Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The village lacks a viable economy; because the men work in remote cities for weeks at a time, the women have a dominant presence in the village. The people of Urubo live predominantly in traditional mud huts and do not have a public meeting space for communal activities. Consequently, the project evolved into a community center designed specifically for women and children—an open structure able to accommodate 150 people. It is intended for use as a church, but also functions as a kindergarten and a market place.

The project took the form of a collaboration between skilled workers from the community and voluntary workers organized by the NGOs which financed the project. It was overseen by LIGHT, a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to creating small-scale civic architecture for economically diverse and self-supporting, yet developing communities.

The design concept is based on the verse from 2 *Corinthians* 3:16: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." This idea is best expressed in the open, uncluttered, and circular plan. The open plan allows for people to sit on individual stools and move about as they wish, unlike the fixed pews found in conventional church design.





The design of the church also maximized natural energy resources. In Urubo, the connections to water and electricity sources are relatively straightforward. The services and storage for the church are contained in a pre-existing adjacent building to ease maintenance and to manage insects. Thus, the church is fully open, allowing natural light and wind to fill the room.



# ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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## ERRATA

The following unintentional errors were made in Talinn Grigor, "Use/Mis-Use of Pahlavi Public Monuments and their Iranian Reclaim," *Thresholds* 24 (Spring 2002): 46-53.

Page 48, Paragraph 2: "The tomb has panels narrating the story of the Shah..." should read, "The tomb has panels narrating the story of the 'Shahnameh.' The 'Shahnameh' or the 'Book of Kings' is Ferdowsi's major work. It tells the story of the lives of various mythical and historic Persian kings. Images from the 'Shahnameh' were carved on the walls leading to the tomb of Ferdowsi."

Page 50, Paragraph 1: "...the space around the tomb complex was named Freedom Square," should read "...the space around the tomb complex was renamed Freedom Square, or The Shahyad Square, after the Revolution. It is now a museum."



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# DENATURED

I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil—to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society.

—*Nature*

Henry David Thoreau

It is suggested that the production of modern cities has altered the relationship between nature and society in a series of material and symbolic dimensions. It is only by radically reworking the relationship between nature and culture that we can produce more progressive forms of urban society.

—*Concrete and Clay:*

*Reworking Nature in New York City*

Matthew Gandy

The dominant rhetorical stance of modern science, environmental discourse, and writing about nature is fundamentally positivistic and representational. The inherent ambiguity in defining nature is often used as a crutch for vaguely constructed arguments in the service of environmentalist or aesthetic ends. Alternatively, we find precise usage in a post-Enlightenment understanding via a scientific method that, by definition, moves systematically towards linear acquisition of knowledge. Either mode of discourse avoids an interrogation of the ambiguity itself and leads inexorably to an unexamined distinction between culture and nature.

Thoreau's conception of wildness, a form of extreme self-consciousness, reveals a method for reading, writing, and understanding nature. This method for accessing nature's ambiguity, exemplified in the essay "Walking," is less a product of romanticism and more in concordance with the equally ambiguous concepts of the rhizome, smooth space, and nomadism proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In both cases, misappropriation by scholars, critics, and commentators precludes an examination of ambiguity which may provide a more expansive understanding of nature.

Is it possible, then, that nature can be understood not in the surveying out of space and laying of lines (or the organization of knowledge), but rather in the attentiveness to subtle changes and the acquisition of new, non-linear knowledge?

Is a scientific approach towards nature limited by a defined space concerned only with what is already conceivable?

How can we construct a conception of urban nature responsive to ambiguity and how can we incorporate such a nature into our built and cultural environments?

*Thresholds* invites submissions, including but not limited to scholarly works, from all fields. This issue encourages a forum on nature to be approached topically, not in an attempt to define or explain, but rather to propose philosophies and interpretations of the relationship between culture and nature through its inherent ambiguity.

Submissions are due 17 March 2003

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*Thresholds* attempts to print only original material. Manuscripts for review should be no more than 2,500 words. Text must be formatted in accordance with *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Spelling should follow American convention and quotations must be translated into English. All submissions must be submitted electronically, on a CD or disk, accompanied by hard copies of text and images. Text should be saved as Microsoft Word or RTF format, while any accompanying images should be sent as TIFF files with a resolution of at least 300 dpi at 8" x 9" print size. Figures should be numbered clearly in the text. Image captions and credits must be included with submissions. It is the responsibility of the author to secure permissions for image use and pay any reproduction fees. A brief author bio must accompany the text.

We welcome responses to current *Thresholds* articles. Responses should be no more than 300 words and should arrive by the deadline of the following issue. **Submissions by e-mail are not permitted without the permission of the editor.**



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